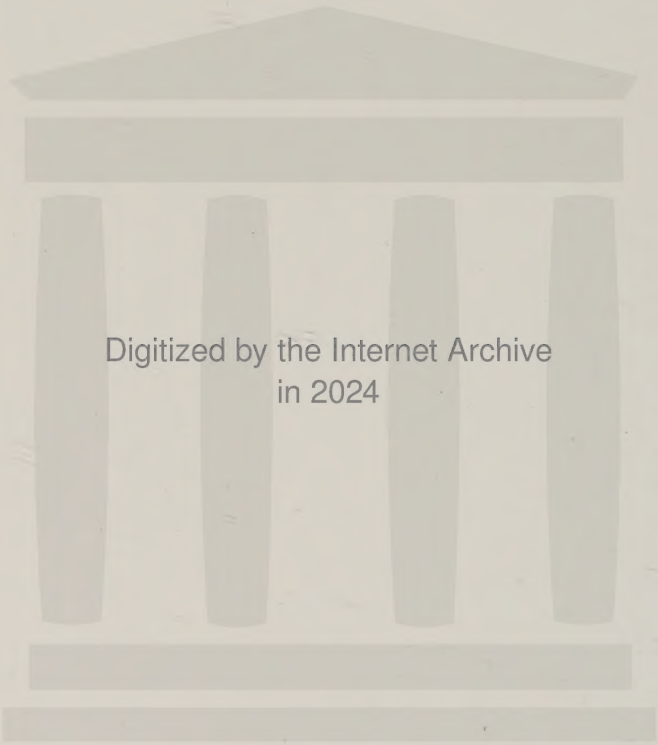
POWER.

A JEWEL FOR THE STREETS

A NOVEL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POWER.

A JEWEL FOR THE STREETS.

A NOVEL BY ZORO

Of course you know I'm working on the movie for the 30 yr. Anniversary.

Peace

A Novel by ZORO

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Written by "ZORO"
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Power; a jewel for the streets: a fictional novel about three male college students that got involved in the drug trade.

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Acknowledgements

To Those that Love. Love
To Those That Hate. Love.

Funny ... every time I read the acknowledgement pages of other novels, some of them sounded like the shout outs of the ghetto fabulous.

I was reluctant to include a descriptive acknowledgement in this book but ... there are people whom I truly have to shout out.

First, my mother, Mom ... thank you. I love you and miss you so much. To my nieces, nephews, brothers and sisters . . . This is just the beginning ... watch my work ... ready or not (Ya shouldn't read this though; it's to street).

To everyone who has enabled me to experience a fun side of life. Mark, day one love and you know I can't stop! B.I.G. (R.I.P.). Cuda ... wow! I see you playa. Datu, Rick, it's a cold world ... get yours. Rob, "spit" at me. Markell. Doo Wop. Monty. Bink. Congratulations! Biz, Ray ... day one love! never scared. Kirk, stay gutter. Dashon ... be easy. AWM family. Big Al, hold ya head; we'll get there in due time. Ron. Art. Much Love! Busta. Butnaked L, dawg ... I remember! keep fighting. Victor. E-Double. C-Boogie. Anthony (a.k.a. "Trigga Tone"), my other twin. And to Pherell! many many congrats kido. You truly deserve it. You and Chad N-E-P-T-U-N-E-S, the way

they lace the track like one of the best. Let's talk about the movie. Harve. Diddy. *Derrick . . . what up.*

Okay now ... to all of the soldiers in the belly: Jo-Jo, Big Jay, Lil Jay, Big Duke, Tricky Nick, Paully, Dawan (a.k.a. young Wizzle), Big Tye, Emory, Mark Riley, Craig "G-money" Kelly, Shlomo (a.k.a. El Judio), Johnny "J-Wish" Wilson, Rob (a.k.a. "Bruce Wayne"), Dre, Sulaiman, Stokes, Peter, "G," P-Town Jay, EV, Larry ... damn ... I heard. Germaine AKA "Maintaine". Stacey. Khalid. Paul and U.S. . . D.C.s Finest. Mustapha. Squeez.

To everyone at Raybrook, Fort Dix, Ottisville, Allenwood, Schuykill, Fairnton, Beckley, Petersburg, Lewisburg, Atlanta, Butner, El-Reno, Lompoc, everywhere, ya know what it is.

To Golden Girl and those topics at night ... damn! Sleeping is just not the same when you're not there at night.

Shouts to Ms. Jones in the morning. Wow! ... it all started from a Ron G tape; Waterbed.

Alright now, let's get this started.

The sooner the pain, the quicker the healing.

. . . ZORO

A Novel by ZORO

The sooner the pain - the quicker the healing.

You do not understand me.
Very few do.
You simply visualize my outer shell,
and try to make it fit you.

It takes years to acquire me,
and deaths beyond your wildest dreams.
For to acquire the ora that I posses.
Your characteristics must be conformed into the scheme.

It's a beating of the heart,
a drilling of the mind,
a command on your conscious, and,
a mastering of time.

You do not understand me.
Yet you chastise my position.
And unless you know my reasoning,
you're quick to blame me for your condition.

If I were to let you in,
you would not know where to start.
You're not mentally fit for my throne,
and you would tear it apart.

I am something that you can't take away.
My soul has been scorched and branded.
And if you really understood me,
then I'm sure you would understand it.

I am a part of thee I AM, and
once you know this,
Then you'll assist in my plans.

In any event that I attend,
I am the man of the hour.

Allow me to re-introduce myself to you.
You've seen me before, ladies and gentlemen. . .
Good evening, my name is Power.

"Just, Blaze!"
PROLOGUE

I couldn't even think clearly with all that had happened. It seemed like holding on to my own sanity was a challenge in itself. There is a big difference between distance and death. One you can overcome, while the other overcomes you in its own suddance.

"Sedique, I know how you feel. We're all devastated, but you have to try to relax. None of this is your fault, "Hap said as my mind obviously drifted away from the dinner table and the fine meal that Melanie prepared for us.

"Boo, are you okay?"

"Yeah Mel, I'm alright. Thank you. I just drifted off for a minute."

"Well excuse me gentlemen," Melanie said as she rose from the table and kissed me on the cheek. "I need to go and call Terry to check on her."

"Sedique, we all know that his cousin came down here to open up, and we know that you didn't neces-

sarily agree with it, but you have to realize now that what has happened will undoubtedly affect us all if nothing is done about it."

"Yeah, I know Hap. And I know what has to be done. I just wish I could do it myself," I said while staring Happy directly in his eyes from across the table and forking the stew chicken in front of me.

"Black?"

"Yeah, what's up Hap?"

"What do you want to do?"

"What do you mean what do I want to do?" Black responded with a mouth full of chicken and death in his eyes. "I didn't travel all the way down here for nothing. I could've picked up a job right in the city. Since Dre explained the whole thing to Sedique, we know who's behind it. We know who's responsible and we know who did the hit. We'll send Quick a message and as for his young gun, 'W.T.,' he signed his own death certificate the night he went against us. Sedique, just lay back and relax. Watch my work. You're going to like this one," Black said with a pleasing yet devilish look on his face.

We all continued to eat while discussing what was to be done. Things just weren't the same. My moves were always quiet. Hustlers made noises. Gangsters made money. A subtle reputation was on the line and although my hustler days were over, they were fucking with gangster's pride so it had to be protected. I once read that from the beginning of time, competition for external power has lied at the root of all violence. Years later, it's still a truth.

After dinner, Hap and Black prepared to head back

to their hotel room.

"Sedique, you're okay, right?" I'm leaving tomorrow. Black will still be in his room. I have to get back up top with Ruben."

"Yea, I'm cool. Black how are you getting around?"

"Hap introduced me to this girl down here. One of her girlfriends works at Budget, so I'm renting a car tomorrow when we take Hap back to the airport."

"Oh really?" I remarked in amazement. "Hap, you never told me about any girl you had down here."

"Yeah, yeah, I know. Its nothing major. She saw me the weekend me and Ruben came down to the strip and she basically chose me."

"Whatever."

"Sedique."

"Yeah, what's up Black?"

"I'm going to hang out with Gomez and Dre for a while to see if I can dig up some information on this W.T. nigga."

"Black," I said firmly, looking directly in his eyes. "No mistakes. No mess ups, and no family. Just him!"

"I got you Digue. I got you. Not a problem."

As Happy and Black left and I walked them to the door, closing it behind them. Melanie came up and hugged me. "Boo, what are you all doing?" Please don't get into any trouble Sedique."

"Its okay Mel. I'm right here with you. That's the only trouble I'll be getting into."

She looked at me and smiled softly. "I bet you will, won't you?"

"You know it," I said before smiling back and kissing her on her forehead.

"I know you're still going through it about what happened, but you'll be okay baby, I promise you."

I hugged her and walked behind her into the kitchen, admiring her curves and bowed legs as they now flowed from the powder blue teddy that she had changed into.

"Mel, only four of us ate. Why are there so many dirty dishes?" I asked noticing the pile in the sink.

"What do you think, the food prepared itself Diamond?" she replied, looking even sexier with suds on her hands as she handed me the dishes to place in the dishwasher. As I helped her with the dishes, I teased her. Once the dishes were done, we cleaned the table and again I teased her. Afterwards, she turned the lights off and headed upstairs. Moments later, I was deeply ... in trouble.

The next morning my phone rang at eight-fifteen a.m. "Sedique, wake up, this is Black. I'm with Gomez."

"Okay, good," I interrupted before he said too much over the telephone. "We'll have lunch later or something."

"Okay, I'll be over there at twelve. I have the rental car already."

"Shit," I cursed to myself. I don't want Black to appear to be to familiar to me. In the art of deception, one must remain formless in order to transform, and him with us would be a dead giveaway. He has to appear to be a stranger almost.

At my house that afternoon, we discussed how in order to catch W.T. he has to appear to be on his own. If anyone in the area knew that he was affiliated with us, that would automatically put them on the defensive. If he could get W.T. on his team, then he could do with him as he pleased at any given moment.

The plan was set. Black, who now referred to himself as "Midnight," was to open up in the same spot with some small work. No one would ever know that he was from New York. Either W.T. would want to join him or rob him, which in either case would put Black close enough to him to do what had to be done.

Things were at a disturbing pace for a while. Terry's emotional state was visibly unstable. Bianca didn't want to leave her alone in a house by herself, so she packed a few things and stayed over for a few days. Although we had proceeded into different directions, we were still one in the same. Melanie and Bianca put their differences aside. At least momentarily. Terry needed support and "who I was fucking was of the least importance."

As time passed, memories continued to live. Pictures of us all at parties, on the campus, and out on the strip with our new joints hung on the walls of numerous houses. Ni'chelle called almost everyday to check on everybody, plus let us know how everyone was holding up in the city.

Black was now fully established and stayed at the safe house with Gomez if he wasn't staying at some girl's house in the spot. He had adopted a crystal clear southern accent and everyone loved "Midnight." His thing was that he employed everybody. Even the crackheads had positions as runners.

"Sedique, things are running real smooth right about now. The whole projects call me Miami Black or Midnight and W.T. wants to get down."

"Stay focused Black. You only have one mission and two days."

"Yeah, I know. If you speak to Hap, tell him I'll be home in two days. This money's in the bank."

Exactly two days later, Rumors spread quickly that W.T.'s body was found in the trunk of his mother's car, brains spilled, parked in their driveway. He was a known stick-up kid so nobody was singled out for the hit. His closest friend, Quick, was the only suspect because according to the streets, he was seen driving the car just the night before.

"Boo, ... are you alright?" Melanie asked as we sat up in bed watching the late night news.

"I'm fine, Why'd you ask?"

"Just wondering. You look tense," she said positioning herself behind me and massaging my shoulders.

"Top story. A brutal homicide in the city of Portsmouth." The news reporter stated as he continued to give the gruesome details. "The body of a man in his mid-twenties was discovered today in the trunk of a family car ..." The news channel flashed a picture of W.T.'s face adding that "their only suspect at the time was his close friend who was seen just hours earlier driving the car. " Melanie pulled me back and looked at me. I kissed her and continued to enjoy my massage.

"Don't you have a class tomorrow morning Mel?"

"Yes."

"Okay, let's turn the T.V. off and get some sleep."

"Boo, " she said in her sexy baby voice, turning my head around to look directly into my eyes, ... "Never mind,"

"What Mel? You're okay, right?",

"Yes, I'm fine. Black called me today while you were out."

"Yeah, ... and, ... what did he say?"

"Nothing special. He just wanted you to know that he was home safe. Oh, and he said something about he knew you would like it."

"Okay. Thanks baby. " I pecked her on her lips and hit the light switch. "Good night."

1989
"The Beginning . . . Hypnotized"

Labor Day weekend, 1989.
"Fight the Power" by Chuck D's group Public Enemy was the theme for this beautiful yet busy night.

As well as being blasted from every accessorized car on the strip, it was also yelled from seemingly every voice in the crowd that night.

License plates from as far north as Maine and as far south as Miami all flocked the strip of the ocean front in Virginia Beach - Virginia for its known Labor Day weekend Greek Fest. A weekend when just about every black college student on the east coast got together and partied for seventy-two hours non-stop in any space that was available to either hook-up an outside speaker or blast the stereo systems from Jeep Wranglers, BMW 325's, 190 Benzes, Cherokees, Audies, or one of the many other chrome rimmed vehicles that cruised up and down the neon lit strip all night long.

If there was such a thing as a "ghetto heaven," another late 80's song sung by a group called the Family Stand, then this definitely had to be it.

Every shade and curve of a woman imaginable graced the boardwalk of the beach in Louis Vaton, Gucci, and Beneton bikinis so form fitting and tight that out of mutual respect and admiration, a brother had to speak to a sister and out of eye catching gratitude and collegiate lust, had to adore the expensive material that graced her curves and blew kisses from the V section bikini waxed lips.

The brothers wore flat top haircuts, hollowed out Gucci link chains and three finger rings similar to Big Daddy Kanes. If you weren't fucking this weekend, chances are you weren't doing too much fucking in your life anyway. "Fight the Power! - Fight the Power! - Fight the Power!" was all that was heard. When I turned around and looked, there were at least two-dozen horses in the middle of the street all being ridden by what looked like a more modern day version of the Ku Klux Klan. White men with night sticks, helmets and shields that read VBPD (Virginia Beach Police Department), the cities finest in full riot gear on the best night of the summer. Uproars continued as they began to yell through their bullhorns, "Clear the strip'. Back to your hotel rooms! Clear the strip!"

With one hundred thousand plus students partying, drinking, and having fun, that wasn't going to happen and furthermore, these bastards had some of the hotel entrances blocked off. The scene became the epitome of an early sixties freedom riot when officers began to make attempted arrests for what they now

considered "disturbing the peace."

Fights broke out between the students and the beat cops. All hell broke Loose when bottles started flying and hitting the horses as well as the officers. When the horses charged, the looting began. Every oceanfront store within a fifteen-block radius was smashed and vacated of most, if not all of its merchandise. From jewelry to seashells; they wanted the strip cleared. That's exactly what they got, cleared!

"What did you get?" I asked roommate Malachi when we got back to our dorm room.

We both attended Norfolk State University, which was only a thirty-minute highway drive from the Virginia Beach Strip.

"Check this out," Malachi grinned as he pulled various types of silver jewelry from all of his pockets.

"Malachi, ... news flash. Nobody wears silver jewelry anymore. It's nineteen eighty-nine, not nineteen seventy-nine. You saw everybody out there with their gold Gucci Links and all the Philly crew in their Alpinas. What are you going to do with a bunch of sterling silver?"

"Sell it, somebody will buy this shit. The store sells it. All I have to do is catch a few of those club heads. They'll eat this up. You know they dress all psychedelic and dance funny as it is. All they wear is silver."

Damn. Malachi did have a point. I would've never thought about approaching a bunch of weirdos that

dance to a song called "Jack Your Body." "Check this out," I smiled while opening my locker and pulling out a Benneton duffle bag.

"Sedique, a duffle bag that says the United Colors of Benneton? You might as well put some of these silver bangles on with your back pack and Jack-Jack-Jack-Jack your body. I know out of everything that went down, you got more than a damn duffle bag."

"Yeah, just wait," I said while opening the bag and pulling out the contents. Before it was empty I had the entire Benneton store on the table. Hats, sweaters, t-shirts, belts, purses, you name it.

"Oooohhh, shit, you came off Dique!"

Lucky for me, Kwame, a polka dotted dressing rapper had just got me paid. All he wore was Benneton and polka dotted shit and between him and Kid and Play, I wouldn't have any problem targeting their fans.

"What are you going to do with all of this shit Sedique?"

"Keep some of it, but I'm selling most of it. My cousin goes to Lincoln University, right outside of Philly. They have a splash party every year. I'm taking this up there to get it off. I need some money. You might as well bring all of your silver too."

"I wonder what Jeff got."

"I don't know, we'll probably hear from him soon though he's with them Hampton cats."

Hampton University was about another thirty-minute highway drive from Norfolk State University or N.S.U. as it is well known. Jeff went to Hampton or "H.U." as it is more frequently called. He was a part of our set, but Jeff was from the North Bronx. Two Thirty-Third

and White Plains Road. Not too far from our Lady of Mercy Hospital. Malachi had met Jeff on "The Island" - Rikers Island, back in 1987. They both were in for Jewelry story robberies, both on Canal street and both did short "skid bits" on Rikers Island in the adolescence house, C76.

Malachi, whose mother lived upstate New York in Albany, in a nice suburbian neighborhood, found himself growing up in the City on Lexington Avenue and 122nd Street in Spanish Harlem. Although his mother and stepfather would've given him anything he wanted and asked for, after his brother's death, he became his own man. "Albany was too slow," as he put it. He preferred to be on "the Ave."

Malachi and I basically grew up together. He lived on the 30th floor with his Aunt and I lived on the 14th floor with mine. My mother left New York for a slower pace and moved down to North Carolina when I was about seven or eight years old. My Pops came and went like the seasons. He'd stop in from time to time and question me about school or homework, but more often than not, he was always on the go. If he wasn't hanging out at the racetrack, then nine out often times he was up in S and S. One way or the other, he could be found on 145th street in somebody's gambling spot. Although I'd left and moved down south my junior year in high school, Malachi and I had stayed real close. Some summers I would go up to Albany with him and his family and some summers he would go with me down south to stay with mine. Over the years some distance had come between us. When we first spotted each other on the campus at orientation, we both laughed frantically at

the sight of each other in college. Seeing him surprised me because the last I had heard, he was locked up for the jewelry store robbery.

From that point on we were roommates. Jeff started running with us because as he put it, "Hampton is boring." Plus, since he and Malachi were cool from the Island, he was automatically cool with me.

Later, the three of us would learn that Hampton was in a class all by itself.

"Yo, Sedique. Did you see all the cars that were out on that strip last night?"

"Yeah, I saw them. Did you see that triple black Mercedes with the black interior and white piping?"

Growing up, we both had major car fetishes. All of the older guys on the "Ave." had nice cars and if we would wash them, they would take us for a spin down Lexington Avenue and back up Third Avenue.

"The nigga was pulled over by 5-0 and still talking to girls that walked by," Malachi yelled.

"Yeah, whatever he's doing, he's doing it' right because he was flossin all up in front of 5-0."

"Did you see the girl that was standing there waiting for him? Oh my God was she bad or what?! He wasn't even sweatin her or the cop. As a matter of fact, they were both sweatin him. The cop who had to be both envious and jealous to conjure up a moving violation in bumper-to-bumper traffic plainly wanted to give him any sort of citation. And the girl standing there looking like a tightly wrapped super model wanted to give him something too."

"Wanted to give him what?"

"What else Chi, some pussy!"

"Yo Sedique," Malachi said with a look of disgust and bewilderment in his eyes, "We gotta get paid. We're away from home and in college now. This shit is rough. The whole night out on the strip I was sick to my stomach looking at all the rides out there."

"So what are you saying Chi?"

"What I'm saying is I met this guy who said he lived not to far from the strip. When we were racking up in the jewelry store he asked me where I was from and told me that I could roll with him to his spot to stash the shit from the store."

"Okay, and that's supposed to get us paid?" I asked.

"No, but when I told him that I was from New York, he just came right out and asked me if I had any work. He said he hustles in his neighborhood and needed a steady connect."

"Yeah, well Chi, that still says nothing for us. We don't hustle we're college students trying to off some hot merchandise and you're definitely not a steady connect. You're about as connected as Farrahkhan is to the Jews. So unless you plan on offing this silver shit to stock up on some bean pies, you're not making any sense," I said while looking at Malachi and stuffing my duffle bag with contents of the same brand.

"I know that, you know that, but he doesn't know that. I took his number and told him I'de get back to him. I say we off all of this shit and go cop some real work. What do you think? Are you down or what?"

"Am I down? Hell no I'm not down! How do you know that this guy is not a cop or trying to set you up or both? Didn't you just come off the Island for that jewelry store robbery? Now you come way to Virginia

fresh out of another jewelry store wanting to hustle," I said, adding, "Chi, maybe you need to stop watching those EPMD videos so much. Eric and Parish have you all fucked up. Shit is different down her—Malachi. You know this is where they brought the first slaves don't you? You know this is where they sold the first slaves and are probably still hanging us to this day! You saw all of those horses so you know it's woods around here somewhere."

"Sedique, are you down or not?" Malachi cut me off before reminding me that "We're both up in this dorm room starving." All we have to do is check the guy out. If you don't like what we hear, cool, but if so, after we get rid of this shit at Lincoln, I say we head up top to cop some real work. You know my brother was Ruben's Lieutenant before he got killed. I use to help him bottle up and organize the packs. I'm tellin' you Dique, if this guy is for real, I'm making a move."

"Okay. We'll go after classes tomorrow. You know I'm not going to let you get into anything crazy by yourself. Plus, if this guy is serious, we just might come off down here."

Malachi smiled looking at me. I smiled back and we gave each other a pound and a hug.

"Cool?"

"Cool." We both said right behind the next. Now let's put all of this shit up and go out on the campus.

"Once She Grins I'm in. Game Begins". . . .

"Biology 101," the Professor stated as he wrote the course title on the chalkboard. "You will be required to complete and pass the lab class also in order to satisfactorily receive a passing grade in this class. This is an accredited three hour course and you will receive an additional hour for your lab completion," he said as he continued to discuss the course curriculum and criteria for my Biology class. My mind got lost somewhere in between looking at the curves of the girl sitting in the lecture room auditorium style seat right in front of me and imagining her beside me in my triple black Mercedes Benz with white piping inside. She wore here hair in sleek silk doobie style hairdo. Brown skinned with perfectly manicured nails. Although all of my admirations came with her back facing me, the scent of her apricot body lotion kept me glued to her neck.

"Excuse me," I said, leaning forward and tapping

her on her shoulder. "Can I borrow a pen please?" I had to think of something to say and since I didn't have a pen, what could've been better? Or so I thought. She turned around looking at me with a smirkish look on her face.

"You came to class on the first day with no pen?"

Damn. I felt so stupid as she dug into her purse to retrieve an extra pen for me.

"Thank you," I whispered.

"Mmm, Hmm," she replied, paying me no attention as she continued to write the notes that were being given.

As I sat attempting to do the same, I couldn't help but tap her again. "Excuse me, what's your name?"

She turned around and shot me an irritated glance. "You should've asked me that before you asked to borrow a pen," she replied before rolling her eyes and pointing to the chalkboard signifying that she was taking notes.

As I sat in class writing down the required notes for the day while glancing down her shirt at what had to be at least a D-cup. I caught myself hearing Malachi's voice "we gotta' get paid" while wondering would I have gotten' all of the flack and sarcasm if my attire read Gucci instead of Nike and I had a sixteen valver parked oh-so-cleanly out on the campus. "We gotta' get paid - We gotta' get paid - We gotta' get paid" is all that ran through my mind. Although the professor was speaking and pointing to his writings on the board, between the beauty of this girl sitting in front of me coupled with Malachi's words, the Professor seemed to be speaking a different language. Before I

even realized it, class was over.

"Excuse me, you can give me my pen back now. Class is over and from what I see, you haven't used it much anyway."

I handed her pen back to her and looking out of place, coldly said, "Thank you."

"You're welcome, and by the way, my name is Bianca."

"Bianca," I replied, smiling from ear to ear, hoping to strike up more conversation, "That's a pretty name."

Grabbing her coach bag and stuffing it with her notebooks, she smiled back, "It's only fitting." Then turned and walked away.

As I watched Bianca walk out of our classroom and out of the Biology building in her floral print form fitting sundress with her matching coach bag on her shoulder and a pair of highcut panties disappearing into the valley of her God-gifted ass, I couldn't think of but one note that I had written down during the entire time I'd sat in class.

We gotta' get paid.

Malachi was standing outside waiting for me when I exited the Biology building.

"Sedique, are you all right?"

"Yeah, I'm cool Chi. Why?"

"Just asking. You look dazed. Are you ready?"

"Ready for what?" I asked still fazed by Bianca's beauty.

"Ready to go with me to meet Dre?"

"Who the hell is Dre?"

"Dre is the kid that I met on the strip that night that I said.

"Bingo," I interrupted. "Get paid. Oh yeah, cool. Lets do it."

Malachi went to the pay phone and called Jeff. "Yo Jeff, he's with it. Come scoop us, we'll be waiting for you at the gate."

"You told Jeff about this too?"

"Yeah, you knew I did a bid with him before and I know he's down. Plus he's the only one with at least a half a car that can get us from A to B."

As we sat at the gate waiting for Jeff's arrival, scenes from Al Pacino's most notable roll played through-out my head. Twenty minutes later Jeff pulled up in his eighty-seven Honda Accord, blasting Soul to Soul's newest release "Back to Life." Malachi and I hopped in and reading the directions that he had written on a piece- of paper, Malachi said, "Take the boulevard all the way down until we get to Holland Road and make a right. He's going to meet us at the KFC and then show us the spot."

Dre, a younger looking, light skinned Virginia Beach kid that appeared to be thorough was standing in front of the KFC when Malachi spotted him and told Jeff to pull up to him and let him in.

"Dre, what's up? These are My peeps Sedique and Jeff."

"What's up fellas," Dre said eyeing us nervously, as he got into the back seat and sat down beside me.

"What's up." Jeff and I replied simultaneously.

After about a five minute drive, we pulled into an apartment complex.

"What's the name of this complex?" I asked, noticing the sign had been torn down.

"Plaza Township." Dre replied as we looked and saw kids hanging out, adults walking up and down the street and a couple of abandoned townhouses.

"So, is this the spot?"

"This is it and believe me, it's rolling like a bitch," Dre answered in his most countryfied accent.

Later, after opening up shop, we would discover the phrase "like a bitch" was commonly used amongst everyone in the neighborhood. Although the neighborhood was absolutely nothing like an East Harlem block, it was obvious from the appearance that there was money to be made out here.

We entered Dre's apartment and discussed a possible set up, explaining to him prematurely that we could get the product if he agreed to be the lieutenant for this complex.

One hour later, Jeff, Malachi and I were back in the car on our way back to our dorm room. When we left Dre, he was excited and almost fainted when Malachi told him held be calling him back soon to open up shop. On the ride back to N.S.U., I told Jeff and Chi about the girl I'd met in my Biology class earlier today.

"Chi, you gotta' see her. She's a stallion."

"Where is she from?"

"I don't know. I didn't ask her."

"What's her name? Do you at least know that much?"

"Bianca. Her name is Bianca. And I gotta' have her. I'm surprised you didn't see her when I walked out of the Biology building earlier. The girl that had on the sundress with her coach bag over her shoulder."

"Oh, that one. Yeah, I do remember the sundress with floral print. She had her panties going right up

the crack of her ass."

"Exactly," I remarked as I looked at Chi strangely and smiled.

"Sedique, I hate to burst your bubble, but Shorty got in some guy's Mustang, so you might as well cancel that thought."

"Mustang! A fucking Mustang?"

"Yes nigga, a Mustang with four wheels. Why? Were you planning on giving her a ride in your Nikes?"

"Yeah. yeah, very funny Chi." I replied as I enviously pictured myself at the Porshe dealer kicking the tires and giving bullet proof specifications for the brand new 911 I just purchased as Bianca stood there watching and Malachi toyed behind the wheel.

I was all ready knee deep in peer pressure for the lust of pussy and greed of fame before I even touched a controlled substance. My surroundings were set and now the choices were mine.

Back in our dorm room the three of us sat and totaled up approximately how much cash we could get from the silver jewelry, the Benneton clothes and all of the different style hats that Jeff had gotten from hitting the hat store for two-hundred and ten hats during the looting on the strip.

If everything went well at Lincoln's splash party and the Philly Greek-nic in Fairmont Park, we would off everything and have a total of four thousand, six hundred dollars. Not bad considering the fact that we were dead broke with a promising future.

"Sedique, do you remember Puerto Rican Happy from a Hundred Street between Third Avenue and Lexington Avenue?"

"Yeah, Happy that used to ride the dirt bikes? He had Washington and Wagner projects in a smash when I left the city. I heard he was making some moves out in North Philly too."

"Yeah, and he still has good prices. That's who we need to see. We'll catch him but we'll have to stay in the city for a few days."

"I can't afford to miss many classes," Jeff stated. "The Lincoln trip will all ready set me back a few days."

"Okay Jeff. Damn!" Malachi interjected. "We won't stay any longer than we have to. Sedique, when we get there, you talk to Happy since you know him."

"Wait. Why me? Hap knows my family too well. That's all I need is anyone to find out that I'm hustling."

"Well, I can't approach him. I know my brother was Ruben's man, but I never really met Hap. Plus, he's not going to say anything but yes or no, and if he says yes, why would he tell anyone. And if says no, then whatever he says won't matter. We'll leave Wednesday night for Lincoln University, hit the city by Friday night, and be back in Virginia by Monday in time for class."

"Yo, I'm going to need fifteen dollars a piece from the both of you," Jeff said.

"For what?" Chi and I asked at the same time, looking at Jeff like he was crazy.

"I'm taking my car to get a tune-up before we hit the road. Or would you guys rather we just chance it?"

Malachi and I both reached into our pockets at the same time.

Jeff smiled. "I thought so."

The trip was planned and Wednesday came around in no time.

Bianca, how are you doing?" I asked as I entered my Biology class and sat directly be hind her again.

"Fine, Sedique, I hope you have a pen today."

As quick as I could find it, I pulled out my pen and waived it in the air smiling. "Wait a minute, you called me by my name. How did you know my name is Sedique?" I asked while smiling and feeling extraordinarily important since she obviously went out of her way to find out who I was.

"Well, since you were the only one late to class and when the roll call was being taken, everybody answered except for a Sedique Faison. I just naturally assumed that you fit that description."

"Oh," I said while swallowing a knot in my throat and feeling like Jay Jay getting dissed by Thelma in Good Times.

"Yes, that's me. Sedique Faison. I had to . . ."

"Wait, you don't have to explain to me. I'm not the Professor, he is," Bianca said pointing to Professor Keys and making sure her back was completely turned to me.

Bianca leaned over to whisper something to her girlfriend that sat beside her in class. As she moved I noticed that the apricot lotion smell that once tantalized my nasal passages had been replaced with the

rich scent of Blvgari. If she was trying to allure me with the science of aromatherapy, then she was doing a great job. The only thing that I wanted to dissect in this Biology class was her. After whispering to her girlfriend, she got up from her seat and exited the class - this time in a skin tight black Donna Karen cat suit with a red racing stripe running right between her legs. When Bianca was finally out of eyesight and on the other side of the door, her girlfriend turned around and looked at me with a "she's expecting you to follow her" look. I instantly got the message, grabbed my belongings and cut out of class before she could even open her mouth.

As soon as I entered the hallway, Bianca was standing at the exit door holding her books, this time toted in a different color coach bag that matched the red stripe and her black and red shoes.

"What's up Bianca? Why did you just get up and leave in the middle of class?"

"I didn't just leave, Sedique. I purposely came here in the hallway hoping you would follow to give you the opportunity to explain something to me."

"Explain what?"

"Sedique, inside of my bag I keep a small make-up mirror."

"Yeah, ... and?"

"And I would like for you to explain to me why is it that during our entire class period, whenever I reach into my bag to pretend I'm getting a pen or something out and look into my mirror, your eyes are either glued to my breast or staring at my thighs?"

"Oh," I said, trying to play it off as cool as possible, knowing that I was busted. "You caught me, huh?

Well, Bianca, if you must know, and I sense that it's only fair that you must since you obviously told your girlfriend to give me that look, what more can I say - you're beautiful and given the opportunity, I would really like to get to know you better."

"Sedique, thank you. That's so kind of you, but I'm sorry, I have a friend."

"I know. My roommate told me all ready. The guy with the Mustang, right?" I rhetorically replied. "Well, my peace has been spoken and your inquiry has been answered. No harm meant, okay? I'll see you next week. I'm not going back into class."

"Next week? You're not going to 'The Bridge' this weekend? You know it's a big party there, right? DJ Kid Capri is Dee Jaying. I think the guy Moebetta is throwing this one."

"No, not this time. I can't make it. I'm going home for the weekend. Plus, I'm going to shoot up to Lincoln University with my roommate and a friend to go check my cousin."

"Okay, nice talking to you Sedique."

"The same to you Bianca."

"Oh, Sedique. By the way, where is home? Where are you from?"

"Harlem," I replied. "Harlem, U.S.A. We're at the top of New York City."

"Ohh," she smiled. "Do you live close to the Apollo Theater?"

I laughed lightly and smiled. "Yes, very close."

"Can you bring a t-shirt back?"

As soon as she asked that, my mind started racing. As sexy as she is and with all of that ass, I knew she

had at least seen New York.

"Sure, no problem. By the way Bianca, where are you from?"

She put her hands on her hips and shifted her weight before saying in the sweetest voice, "D.C."

At that moment, we looked at each other and I knew that friend or not, sooner or later, I would have Bianca's thick thighs wrapped around me as she clung to me for dear life.

"D.C., what part?"

"Northwest, I live on Georgia Avenue, not to far from Howard University."

"Oh yeah," I replied. "Why didn't you go to Howard?"

She looked at me closely as if she wanted me to read her lips in slow motion ... "I wanted to get away from home."

"The Infrastructure of America's Racism Produces one of Two Things, Slaves . . . or Crime."

Wednesday night we hit the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel heading up Route 13 North to Lincoln University. Jeff and I took turns driving because Malachi's license was suspended and he had bigger things in mind other than securing his priorities and getting his license renewed. The ride from N.S.U. to Lincoln University took a little over four and a half hours. That's including the stops for McDonalds, gas, and the fact that Jeff kept checking on his car's radiator.

Once we arrived at the gates of Lincoln University, which seemed to be tucked away down a long windy road, everything went as planned. My cousin belonged to the fraternity of Omega Psi Phi. or "the Q's" as they're more commonly known, and he helped us off most of the Benneton and silver. Jeff popped his trunk and turned into an automatic hat stand on

wheels. It was like we brought life in the form of an instant flea market to Lincoln University. At the splash party that night, we all looked around at the women who made a once stuffed bag full of hot Benneton merchandise look so stylish.

Over in the corner were a circle of club heads that all sported new hats and silver jewelry. Style didn't even seem to matter. The weirder the better it appeared as they all danced in circles around each other, looking like a group of spasmatic slaves. Before we knew it, most of the merchandise was gone and (the next morning) we were heading to New York with a little less than we had planned.

Once we reached the city, Jeff dropped Malachi and I off on 125th Street and then jumped back on the West Side Highway and headed home.

Early that morning, 125th Street was still packed. The stores were closed and the vendors were gone, but the streets and the sidewalks were flooded with a sea of faces and cars. Guy had just finished performing inside of the Apollo and it was a constant car show outside, with the exception of few dirt bikes wheeling in between cars. Alpha Romeos, Audis, BMWs, Jeeps, and a crew of Volkswagon GTI's in different flavors all sat double-parked in front of the Apollo from Seventh Avenue all the way to Eighth Avenue. The scene was very similar to the Labor Day weekend in Virginia Beach with only a few exceptions. No bikinis were out and the majority of the tags read New York and New Jersey.

"Sedique, do you think Happy is out here this time of the morning?" Chi asked as we walked east on 'two fif.'

"I don't know, but there's Ruben right there. That's Hap's lieutenant so he definitely knows where he is. I can find out and tell Ruben to let him know that we're here for a few days and want to see him."

"Okay, cool. Let's go rap to him, but Dique, 'we' don't want to rap to him - You want to rap to him. I told you I don't know him like that."

"Okay Chi, Damn! You act like he bites or something," I mumbled as we approached Rube.

"Oh shit! Sedique, what's up?" Rube smiled upon seeing me.

"You're cousin told me that you were in college down in Virginia now."

"Yeah, and guess who I have for a roommate, of all people?"

"Who? Him?" Rube asked pointing to Malachi.

"Yeah, me," Malachi laughed.

"Word? I thought you was still up north for that jewelry store robbery down on Canal Street back in the day. We all heard about that Chi. You know your brother would've been real upset with you for that shit."

"Yeah, I know Rube. I 'm straight now. I did 13 months and got out. I got my G.E.D. on the Island and decided to go down south to college."

"Rube," I interrupted, "Where's Happy? I need to talk to him about some moves I'm trying to make. He's still at a Hundred Street, right?"

"Yeah, we got 100th, 102nd, and 119th Street now. As a matter of fact, there's Hap right there," Rube pointed as we turned our heads to see a lime green Suzuki 1100 motorcycle up in the air with a Puerto - Rican guy waving while his fat rope chain swung from

his neck as he wheelied the block.

"Oh shit. I see he's still nice on those bikes, huh Rube?"

"Judge for yourself. He just bet Lucky from Jefferson projects that he could do Third Avenue from 124th Street all the way down to 116th Street for ten grand."

"Did he do it?"

"You see that chain swinging from his neck? Well, that's five of the ten grand that he won," Ruben answered while checking the Motorola pager attached to his pants.

"Sedique, what type of move are you trying to make? You're a college boy now."

"Yeah, well, I'm a broke college boy and I just want to talk to Hap."

"Okay, listen. I gotta' make a run." Ruben said while walking around to the driver's side of his white Acura Integra. "Meet us tomorrow at ten a.m. at the House of Style on 116th and Lexington."

"Okay, not a problem. As a matter of fact, I need a hair cut anyway."

After we had finished chatting with Ruben, Malachi and I continued east on 125th Street towards Lexington Avenue. It felt good to be back in New York if only for a couple of days. The entire attitude was different; something that I'd missed.

"Yo, Dique," Malachi said slowly. "I hope this works out for us, but if not, we still can be some fly college students."

"How?" I asked.

"Easy, we have almost five thousand dollars in cash. We could split this up and go on a shopping spree."

"A shopping spree? I don't think so Chi. You see that right there?" I asked pointing to a blue Mercedes that drove by. "That's what I need, a joint."

Once we hit Lexington and headed down to 122nd Street to our building, Chi came up and crashed on my couch. It was already two in the morning and it felt like ten o'clock came as soon as I closed my eyes, because just that quick, Malachi was shoving me when he came into my old room, now inhibited by my little cousins, to wake me up.

"Dique, it's nine fourty-five. Get up! We gotta' be at House of Styles at ten, plus, I called Jeff and told him what was up and to meet us there no later then ten fifteen."

I jumped up, threw some water on my face and was out the door before anybody even knew that I was home that night. Except for my little twin cousins Keith and Kevin. I'm sure they would tell my family when they woke up. I had to pick Keith up and put him in Kevin's bed and although he was probably in an average eight year old dream, I know he saw me because as soon as I laid him down he said, "Sedique, take me to Virginia Beach so I can play."

"Okay," I told him. Two seconds later he was out cold.

Hap was sitting in the chair getting a shape up from Razor Rick when we walked inside the House of Style. Ruben was leaning up against a pay phone talking on his cell phone.

"Sedique, what's up country boy?" Hap said once he spotted us through the mirror. I guess my Girbau Jeans and Reebok Classics couldn't even begin to

compete with his Sergio Tachinni sweatsuit and brand new Nike Airs.

"What's up Hap? Good to see you too."

Rick looked at me. "What, you don't have barbershops in Virginia? You need a cut."

"I know, and it's nice to see you to Rick."

Just the vibe of that brief moment in the barbershop made it all sink in. My pace had slowed down tremendously and I needed to get back into a New York State of mind.

Nevertheless, everybody knew that although Razor Rick, and I were cool, I had a 52 style that couldn't be stopped. Rick fronted on me in the barbershop some years ago when I was trying to kick it to Angel so I dropped him. Stag-a-lete, as it was called on the east side. We've been cool ever since though.

Angel was this super thick girl from the Brownsville section of Brooklyn that use to do nails in the shop. Her booth was right in the window and everybody that walked by and laid eyes on her basically wanted to fuck her. A golden brown five foot eight stallion with hazel eyes and those pull-my-hair-and-spank-me braids in her hair. She had Jamaicans with dreadlocks and no worldly intentions for a haircut hanging out in front of the barbershop and even coming in to get their nails done just to be in her presence. To this day I still don't know of anybody who has ever fucked her. Word was that she had some cat out of Brooklyn knee deep and nose open, which is clearly understandable.

"Sedique, Ruben told me you wanted to rap to me about something."

"Yeah Hap. When you get out the chair, we'll rap while I wait to get a cut."

Happy stood up and looked in the mirror. "Cool," handed Rick fifteen dollars and came over to sit beside me while Malachi got in the chair and spent a whole hour getting his blow cut freshly done until his hair resembled mink. While Hap and I sat and talked, I told him that we had thirty-five hundred dollars and that I needed some material for this spot in Virginia I wanted to open up. Just as we began conversating, Jeff walked in. I introduced Jeff to Happy and Ruben and told them that he was down with us and went to school in Virginia also. Jeff sat in Mike's chair and got his flat top done as I continued to discuss my needs with Happy. Before the conversation ended, Happy talked to me about how he knew my family didn't have it but I was in college and soon I might become a doctor or businessman or something.

"Don't get into anything over your head Sedique."

"I know Hap. I'm just trying to get some dough so I can get a little more established in order to focus on my education and what I'm eventually going to do."

"Well, how much money do you need? Why didn't you just ask for some paper? You know we got you Dique."

"Okay, fuck it. Let me get a hundred thousand Hap."

"A hundred thousand! What in the hell do you need a hundred thousand dollars in college for four years for?" he asked with a get-the-fuck-out-of-here facial expression.

"Well, I want an apartment or townhouse down there so that I don't have to live on campus with all the low budgets and non-discripts. Then I'm going to

need a nice car to get back and forth to school. Something simple like a BMW or an Acura like Ruben's. Then I need some new gear so that I feel comfortable when I pull up in my joint, and I need to lace Malachi and Jeff. They're my crew and we move together down there. Oh, plus I met this girl from D.C. named Bianca . . ."

"Hold, hold, hold," Hap stopped me, obviously hearing enough. "Listen Sedique, I feel you. I've been broke before, but I'm not giving you a hundred thousand. That's totally out of the question. I'll tell you what, give your family the three thousand and I'll give you 250 grams. You don't owe me anything, but when it's time for you to re, you know where to come. And Sedique," he said looking at me with a serious yet sorrowful look, "What all of us are doing is wrong. This is not our game. We're just pawns being used to checkmate our own genocide. I'm in New York City kid. I blew by force, which seems to have been my only choice in this concrete jungle. Get in and get out, "he demanded still glued into my eyes. "We're not the real gangsters or the real players. The real ones wear suits and discuss us over brunch, guaranteeing each other dinner if they can serve us over lunch."

I didn't know what the hell Hap was talking to me about, but it sure sounded like he did. Nevertheless, I gave my aunt the three thousand. I told her that it was some extra money from my new business selling t-shirts down south. Actually, that wasn't far from the truth. I just didn't tell her they were stolen.

Back in our building, my Aunt Freckles didn't even question the validity of my t-shirt story, although she

looked at me and Jeff like we must've thought she was crazy.

"Sedique, does your mother know you're up here?"

"No, I just rode up with Jeff and Malachi for the weekend. Jeff needed to pick up some more clothes," I lied.

"Where's that Malachi? Tina told me that that child was still locked up. Next thing I know he's in college in Virginia with you."

Ms. Tina was Malachi's aunt who lived upstairs.

"He's upstairs now. He'll be down in a minute," I told my aunt.

"You giving me three thousand dollars and hanging out with

Malachi, what are you two up to? Never mind, don't even answer that," she groaned before making sure the money was safely up in her room.

Later that afternoon, we met Happy and Ruben at a nice little restaurant uptown on 135th Street called "Twenty-Two West." I guess that was convenient for both of us since Ruben had a girl who lived in Lenox Terrace and the three of us would be heading up to the Bronx back to Jeff's basement.

As soon as we sat in a booth, Hap gave me a "Blimpies" bag containing a sandwich and 250 grams. Just that quick we were out and back at Jeff's house preparing for the trip back down to Virginia. With the travel money that we had set aside, we still had seven hundred and fifty dollars left. We each took two hundred a piece and that left us one-fifty for road and food money. When Sunday morning arrived, we we're about to leave the city heading to I-95 South to

13 South back to Virginia, but first we had to make one more stop.

Bianca wanted some t-shirts and I felt like Romeo picking them out.

Jeff's car didn't give us any problems and the ride back down to Virginia was a smooth one. We had not even thought about being nervous until we saw the State Troopers on the New Jersey Turnpike pulling cars over left and right. The turnpike had always been known for its racial profiling, ever since and even before Assata Shakur, was charged with the allegations against her back in 1974 . The only difference now was the terminology used. "Character description" was their frequently used escape goat for harassment. If you just happen to be black and in a nice car, then you fit the description. Jeff's 1987 Honda Accord with a Hampton University sticker on the bumper could have gotten us across the Mexican border. We couldn't have been characterized as nothing other than "broke college students." However, for some reason outside of the 250 grams that were stashed in the spare tire, every time we saw a cop we all sat up straight and looked nerdish.

We had agreed that Jeff would drive the whole trip back. Malachi seemed to conclude that since Jeff wore prescription eye glasses, he looked better driving than I did. I didn't want to drive anyway, so I agreed hands down.

We made it back to Virginia in a little less than six hours. Instead of going directly back to our dorm

room, we got a hotel room for the night not too far from N.S.U. on Military Highway, right across from the Military Circle Mall. As we unloaded our belongings from the trunk, Jeff maneuvered the spare tire and retrieved our golden egg. Once upstairs in our room, while I was showing Malachi the t-shirts that I had purchased for Bianca, he reached into his pocket and pulled out a small black plastic case.

"What the fuck is that Malachi?"

"A scale, brainiac. How else do you think we're going to weigh out the work?" He opened the little black case and removed a shiny silver finger scale. Jeff handed him the package and Malachi clipped the scale to one end of the zip-lock bag.

"You can't weigh all that with that little scale," Jeff said watching Malachi try to read a weight measurment. "That's a weed scale. It only weighs 100 grams at a time at the most. We have to break it down into ounces."

"Duh," Malachi replied, as if he already knew that. "We might as well break it down now so we can get this show on the road."

For the rest of the night, our one room Carter was in full operation. Jeff weighed out twenty-eight grams at a time and made nine piles. "That's it, nine ounces."

Malachi and I took razor blades and cut each ounce into little rocks about the size of a garden pebble. After it was all said and done, we had nineteen thousand, eight hundred dollars worth of small twenty-dollar rocks. We made nineteen "G" packs which consisted of one thousand dollars or a "G" worth of rocks and one eight hundred dollar pack. At the completion of our production operation, Jeff handed us

both a Sprite. "Let's make a toast."

Malachi tried to open his Sprite first. "What the fuck is this?"

At the same time, the entire top of my can came off, and Jeff, laughing at both of us said, "While you were buying t-shirts Romeo and while you bought the scale Malachi, I saw these in the window of the Army-Navy store and figured we could give them to Dre' for the perfect stash spot. They're not up on these down here."

We all smiled. Malachi called Dre' and told him to meet us at the McThrift Motel on Military Highway tomorrow at four p.m. sharp, room two twenty two.

Monday morning we all had classes. Jeff dropped us off at N.S.U. and then headed back to Hampton. As soon as I hit the campus, I spotted Bianca walking into the Student Union Building. Malachi caught me staring at her. "Yo Dique, she is nice, but what about Mr. Mustang?" I just looked at him with a brand new nineteen thousand, eight hundred dollar grin and he smiled back at me.

"Yeah kid... it's about to get real fly for us on this campus." We gave each other a pound and went separate ways to class. Bianca spotted me and waved. Rushing to class and not wanting to appear to be too open, I simply nodded my head, "See you in class tomorrow." I didn't know why, but out of every girl on the campus that day, Bianca, now standing in the doorway with another one of her girlfriends, really seemed to stand out. When I glanced in her direction, she looked at me with a stank look of bewilderment and smirked as if to brush me off for not offering more conversation.

Malachi's last class was over at three o'clock. At the end of classes today I stood outside of the Technology Building waiting for Chi to come out. Jeff was scheduled to pick us up at the gate at three fifteen sharp so we could all meet with Dre back at the hotel room at four.

"Yo Chi, what took you so long? I asked as he exited the building and we made our way to the gate." It was already three twenty and we were running late.

"I had to copy some extra notes. We have a landscaping project coming up and this architectural shit requires a lot of math. Sedique, for you to be the one with the Black History Lesson, you sure are amped now about Dre'."

I looked at him puzzled as we approached the gate to see Jeff parked there with his hazard lights blinking. "What Black History Lessons," I asked.

"Oh, how soon we forget Mr. 'You know Virginia is where they brought the first slaves, sold, hung, blah, blah, blah'."

I looked at Chi and laughed. We jumped in with Jeff and made it back to the hotel in a little over fifteen minutes. It was almost three forty and Dre' was to meet us at four sharp.

The three of us had already discussed not telling him exactly how much work we had and agreed to give him two "G" packs at a time and demand fifteen hundred dollars back, letting him keep five hundred for himself. When all of the work was finished we would get fourteen thousand, giving him three hundred off of the last eight hundred dollar pack.

At four o'clock sharp, Dre knocked on the door and

Jeff let him in. We all sat down and went over the details, scheduling times when we could hang out in Plaza Township with him during the shifts. At the conclusion of our conversation, Dre took the first two Gee packages and Jeff dropped him back in his neighborhood at five fifteen.

"Jeff, tell Malachi to call me around ten or eleven tonight. It's been rollin' like a bitch all day so I should have most, if not all of this finished then."

"Take your time kid. Be careful. There's a lot more where that came from."

By ten o'clock that night, Dre had given us two thousand dollars straight and said that he'd bring us a thousand flat off the next package. The next morning before classes Jeff went to the front desk to pay our hotel room up for two more days then we all went to the mall across the street to purchase beepers. We even purchased one for our newly discovered fortune named Dre. After purchasing the beepers and paying for our hotel room, we had fifteen hundred dollars left from the first money we'd collected. Jeff dropped us off at the campus and routinely headed back to Hampton University.

Tuesdays and Thursdays were my favorite school days because I had Bianca 101 on those days. When Biology class started, I was on time in my favorite seat directly behind her. "What's up Bianca? How are you?"

"Hi Sedique. I'm surprised you spoke first. You acted like you were too cool to wave at me yesterday. I'm all right anyway. How was your trip?"

"It was cool," I stated while pretending to be so into the notes being given by Professor Keys.

Minutes went by and nothing else was said between us. The silence was unimportant and unimportant meant no action so I did what any newborn baller with a beeper would do to attract the attention of his feminine prey. I kept flicking the little button on the side of my beeper to make it go off like I was receiving alot of pages. It worked. Bianca picked up her infamous coach bag and pretended to be looking for something, only this time when I caught her peeking into her little mirror, I checked my numberless pager and whispered just loud enough for her to hear me, "Ssshhhiitt!"

She broke her neck to turn around, "What's wrong Sedique? Do you need to use the phone?"

"Nah, it can wait," I lied oh-so-importantly. "Bianca, I have something for you." I reached into my bag and pulled out three t-shirts and a Benneton sweater. "I Love New York," "I survived the New York Subway," and a t-shirt with a picture of the Apollo Theater on the front that read "Showtime" on it and "HARLEM" in bold letters on the back.

"Oh, Sedique, thank you, " she smiled, looking at me with a "damn you've got a beeper and brought me some t-shirts, let me give you a little pussy" look. "You missed a nice party last weekend Sedique. D.J. Kid Capri killed it. He even played some go-go by Junk Yard. I wish you would've been there."

My dick slid down to my kneecap just hearing her say the words "I wish" and "Sedique" in the same sentence.

"Next time," I replied, "I won't miss the next one."

Class ended and neither of us had paid much

attention to the lesson for today. When we got into the hallway, she in troduced me to her girlfriend Terry.

"Hi Terry. Nice to meet you."

"Hey Sedique, nice to really meet you," she said in the thickest D.C. accent while looking down at the beeper clip that was professionally exposed on my pant's pocket.

"Bianca told me that you are from Nue Yawk. Those are some nice t-shirts you gave her."

I smiled. "Thank you. Nice to meet you Terry, but I have to run and catch my roommate."

"Sedique, wait," Bianca called as she walked over to me, about to exit the door. "Why haven't you given me your beeper number?"

"I'm fucking," is all I that raced through my mind as I looked this beautiful creature up and down, but the only words that I could get out were, "Didn't you tell me that you had a friend?"

"Yes Sedique, but that doesn't mean that I can't call you."

"Oh, I'm fucking for sure," I said to myself as I wrote my beeper number on a piece of paper and gave her code number one.

Malachi was standing in front of the gym talking to some tall guy when I approached. "Yo Chi, I just gave Shorty my beeper number and guess what?" I emphasized. "She asked me for it! I gave her code number one."

"Word?" Who was the other girl with her?"

"Oh, she's in my Bio class too. You saw her, huh? Not bad. That's Bianca's girlfriend, her name is Terry."

"Yo Dique, this is Riz. He's from Queens. He's down with the W.A.M. family that we heard about." Riz was at least six foot four inches tall and a real smooth brother.

"Riz, this is my man Sedique. Sedique, Riz."

"What's up?" We both said at the same time.

A second later Jeff pulled up.

"Yo, how did you get your car on campus? You don't have a N.S.U. sticker."

"The officer at the front gate just waved me on so I drove right past him. Never mind that though, get in, we gotta' talk."

As soon as we got in, Jeff pulled off and handed me twenty-five hundred dollars. "Dre said it's been rolling like a bitch. I had to leave class and drive all the way over here so I could hit him with some more work."

"Yo fella's, I think we might really have something here, I said. "At this rate we're going to be able to see Happy again real soon."

In five days, just about all the coke was finished. Dre had moved over two thousand dollars in pieces everyday. Sometimes twice a day. He still owed us two thousand dollars and he gave us that out of his pocket the following night when we all went out to Bennigans for dinner. Fourteen thousand dollars even is what we pulled in from one newly opened spot and one worker in a little over six days. Sitting in Bennigans that moment we knew we had something but we had absolutely no idea what was in store for us.

I walked over to the pay phone to beep Happy's

Skytel number, putting in my code along with how much money we had, followed by the number of days it would take us to get back up top. The beep was 122-14-1. A hundred and twenty-second was the code, fourteen was the money in thousands, and one meant that I'll be in New York tomorrow.

As we all sat in Bennigans watching the game and eating pasta, we discussed how fast that spot had generated money. My beeper went off and I detached it from my pants, hoping that it was Bianca. When I read the beep, it was even more surprising. Happy had immediately returned my beep putting 122-1000-1. That meant he had one-thousand grams for us tomorrow. I showed the beeper to Malachi and then to Jeff. The table was silent as we all looked at each other in awe. Dre didn't know what the hell was going on as we looked at him like we all wanted to french kiss him.

"Yo Stickman, we're going to need some more spots," Malachi said with a serious smile.

"Dre, find you some workers," I added. "From now on, you sell weight."

That night, just as sure as the sun sets, we were on our way to go pick up our first kilo.

"P.i.m.P."

Bianca, that guy Sedique in our Biology class is kind of cute! I see the way he looks at you with those fine-ass green eyes of his. And don't tell me you haven't been checking him out."

"Okay Terry, you caught me, damn. Yeah, he is fine, but you know Regg would have a fit if he even thought I was looking at someone else."

"Girl, listen. I know that's your man and all but that mutha fucka is too insecure! You sure he doesn't have a tracking device planted between your legs? I'm not tellen you to fuck what's-his-name. What is his name again anyway?"

"Sedique."

"Sedique, yeah. Damn, he even has one of those sexy names! Anyway, I'm not telling you to fuck Sedique, but you need to stop living in a shell, plus, I've peeped his friend that meets him outside after class. I'm trying to get with that. Hook a sister up."

"Terry, you don't even know him."

"I know three things about him already. I like his

look. I like his style and he's doing something because he has that serious look in his eyes all the time. All I have to do is meet him and that's where you come in."

"I don't know him. I see him just like you see him. All I know is that he's Sedique's friend."

"Girl, you know Sedique likes you. Shit, I can almost feel his dick poking through the back of my chair, and he's not even staring at me in class. He's all down your shirt sizing up those wonder twins. Bianca, listen. I'm not going to tell you anything wrong or try to salt your relationship, but you know your family doesn't see why you put up with all the bullshit he puts you through. If that bastard ever puts his hands on me, you won't have anything else to worry about because I'll kill him for you!"

"Terry, why are you getting all up in my ass like this? I told you yes, Sedique is cute and I kind of like him. Okay? Wait. I really like him."

"I know it Hoe. Didn't he give you his beeper number?"

"Yeah."

"Gurrl, you better use it, and don't forget to hook a sister up while you're at it. We are too fly to be sitting up in this damn dorm room. Especially when I don't even have a man and yours is a nutcase. Thank God he's out of town. You need a break from his ass."

"Terry, all you think of is dick. Calm down."

"Hold on. Wait one minute Ms. Bianca. You're the one that told me that Regg couldn't handle his business in bed, so realistically speaking, you haven't had a good piece since you met pee wee. Don't get all uptight with me just because my cookies get cracked every now and then."

"Girl, please. Don't think I traveled 300 miles to

college and didn't bring Bruno. Two double D batteries and these panties will stick to any wall."

"Mmmm. I knew your little cute ass was a hoe. We all have a little hoe in us, and I saw yours in class a few weeks ago when you intentionally had your panties crammed all up in your ass with that see through sun dress on."

"Yeah, well, that makes two of us Ms. Hook-A-Sista'-Up."

"Okay, so are we on or what?"

"Yes, I have his number. As soon as I hear from Regg and find out when he's coming back, I'll call Sedique. You know neither of them have a car, right? I always see some guy in a white Honda Accord picking them up at the gate at night, so wherever we go, I'll have to drive."

"Okay Bianca, I'm down. Just let me know what's up at least one day in advance so I can get right."

"Get right? What do you mean, get right? What's wrong with you?"

"Nothing, just saying, don't surprise a bitch. I might want to do my hair or nails or douche. Anything."

"Douche!? Terry, I know you don't plan on fucking his friend on the first night that we go out. Girl please don't make me look bad."

"No Miss Prissy. I'm not giving him any on the first night. Scout's honor. So you have nothing to worry about. Why don't you loosen up."

"Okay, okay, my bad. I'm sorry, but stay right because I'm beeping Sedique sooner than you think."

We'd spent a total of fifteen hours non-stop driving on the trip to New York and back to meet Happy. When we got back to Virginia, we checked into the more luxurious Radisson Hotel on the ocean front with a freshly baked 36 ounces.

Business as usual, all night was spent breaking down and bagging up eighteen of the ounces, which would net us twenty-eight thousand. The other eighteen were to be sold as weight in seven, fourteen, and twenty-eight gram slabs. That would bring us an additional eighteen thousand at the minimum.

When it was all said and done, between Plaza Township, Park Place, and Fifteenth Street, our two new spots, we should pull in about forty six thousand dollars. The two new spots were also very lucrative. Like the other, Malachi pioneered them with Dre's help by becoming familiar with all the customers, tricks, and other hustlers. They all took to him and named him Chi-Dub, pronounced "Kie-Dub." Why they called him that, we'll never know. Within days, the work was being distributed at a smooth pace. Dre' was now the man in his neighborhood because not only did he sell to the phiens, he also sold weight to the other hustlers in the immediate area. Occasionally I would go out to Plaza Township to check on Dre. Jeff and Malachi would hit Fifteenth Street and Park Place, both of which were only blocks away from the very strip that induced, influenced and intoxicated our lustful desires that Labor Day weekend.

On the first return from the "Gee" packs we had out on the streets, our objective was to get ourselves a three bedroom townhouse so that we could all live off campus. Jeff's commute would be the longest since Hampton University was a half hour away on the other side of the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel. By Jeff being the only one with a car at the time, we made sure it was serviced regularly.

Eventually we found a nice townhouse in what we thought to be the secluded section of Virginia Beach, an area called Kempsville. We couldn't move in until January and since this semester was just about over, that worked out to be perfect timing. With the Christmas break coming up, it was mutually agreed that we'd spend time with our families and get right back on our grind.

After we had collected from Dre', we put the deposit down for the townhouse. I signed a leasing agreement and we were scheduled to move in during the second week of January.

Troy, one of the Park Place workers that Dre' introduced us to had fucked up a pack and Malachi broke a porcelain ashtray over his face for future warnings. Nonetheless, we continued to hit him with work until his debt was cleared and we could find someone else to replace him.

Fred, an older guy and one of the Fifteenth Street workers was rollin' like a bitch. He was doing at least two "Gee" packs every three hours flat foot, and never came up short at all. As a matter of fact, he made almost as much as he had to give us because he was tapping the bags, making thirty dollars off of our

twenty-dollar rocks. We didn't care. Our money was straight. That's what we cared about.

The Thanksgiving Holiday was only a few days away. As Malachi put it, "we are each others family." So it was unanimously decided that we'd rent some hotel rooms and stay for Thanksgiving.

"Eating turkey ain't going to put no money in our pocket," Malachi reminded us as the three of us headed back towards the campus.

"You're right Chi, I'm with you a hundred percent," I replied, just before my beeper went off.

"626 13 1."

"What the hell is this?" I asked as I showed it to Malachi who was sitting in the back seat counting some money that we had just collected. As I held it and turned around showing it to him. The little light flashed and it vibrated again. "1 page." I pressed the black arrow printed button and the number shown was "626-1219-1."

"Oh shit," I Yelled, looking at the indiglo green screen on the little black box. "Code one, that's Bianca. I need to get to a pay phone."

"Who the hell is Bianca?" Jeff asked as he exited off at the Newtown Road exit and pulled up to a pay phone at the Exxon gas station.

"The girl in my Biology class," I answered while jumping out of the car and dialing the number so fast that I forgot to put a quarter in the phone.

"Hey stupid." Malachi threw me a quarter and I dialed Bianca's number perfectly and slowly making sure I gave each precious number the same special attention.

"Hello," Bianca's voice answered.

"Hello, may I speak to Bianca?" I asked, already knowing it was her.

"Speaking."

"What's up lovely. This is Sedique. You paged me?"

"I know who this is," she answered in my new favorite D.C. accent. "What you doin'?"

"I'm on my way back to the campus. Where are you?"

"In my girlfriend Terry's room in the Twin Towers. Why? You tryin to take me out?"

I just about pissed in my pants. "Take you out. Yeah, sure, where?"

"I'on know. You want to go to the movies or something?"

I looked at the phone receiver that I was holding in my hand and then turned my head swiftly and looked at Malachi and Jeff dumbfoundedly.

"Well, ... yes or no Sedique?"

"Yeah, sure Bianca. Hell yeah, but there's one small problem."

"What's that?"

"I'm not driving. My friend Jeff from Hampton is driving and he's about to drop me and Malachi off at the gate."

"Good," she replied, sounding like she was smiling. "Malachi is with you?"

"Yeah."

"That's your boy that meets you after class, right?"

"Yeah, that's him. He's in the car, why?"

"That's perfect. He can keep my girl Terry company. She wants to meet him anyway, and don't worry about transportation. I have my friends Mustang. He's gone for the week. Tell your friend to drop ya'll

off down by the hospital away from the campus. I'll be parked in the parking lot waiting for you."

I looked up at the clouds and all I could see was Bianca's ass being invaded by a pair of creeping panties. "Okay, we should be there in ten minutes."

"Okay, let me get dressed. Bye Sedique. See you soon."

As soon as I opened the door to get back in the car, both Jeff and Malachi asked me what was up.

"Chi, " I said in a subtle nonchalant voice. "You remember that chick Terry, Bianca's friend, right?"

"Yeah, the girl in your class that she introduced you to. I see them walking together sometimes. Why, what about her?"

"Well, we're taking them to the movies tonight."

"Bad news braniac," Malachi stated. "Negro, . . . we don't have a car and Jeff has to get back to Hampton."

"Malachi, Malachi, Malachi," I said in my calmest voice of wisdom. "If I tell you it's Easter, then start painting some eggs."

"And just what is that supposed to mean Shakespeare?"

"It means my dear Malachi, that we're riding in a Mustang tonight."

"Ohh shit."

"Jeff, don't drop us off by the campus. Take the Merrimac Exit and pull up into the hospital parking lot. They'll be waiting for us there.

"Dique, is this the girl you bought all the t-shirts for?" Jeff asked still puzzled.

"Exactly. You see what a friendly gesture can get you?" I asked, still riding the high of our sudden date.

When Jeff pulled into the parking lot of Norfolk Community Hospital, Bianca hit her hazard lights so we'd see them. Jeff pulled up beside the burgundy Mustang with D.C. license plates and smoke black tinted windows. We exited Jeff's car, each giving him a pound and entered Bianca's Mustang. Malachi climbed into the back seat with Terry as I positioned myself comfortably into the role of the passenger seat pimp.

"Hi Sedique," Terry spoke first.

"What's up Terry? How are you?"

"I'm fine ... what's up Malachi?" I heard her whisper in a low tone as Bianca started the car and pulled off.

The music was on just loud enough to separate the conversations if we wanted to but also let us converse at a normal pitch amongst the four of us.

"So, what movie are we going to see?" I asked, puzzled as to exactly where we were heading.

"There's a comedy show at the Chrysler Hall tonight. Def Comedy Jam is on tour. I would like to go there instead of the movies," Bianca stated.

"Okay, cool. Let's do it."

Bianca whipped her friend's Mustang like she was Mustang Sally herself. "Banita Apple Bun" by a tribe called "Quest" was subtly thumping from the Alpine stereo I had noticed mounted in the dash - "Hey Banita, glad to meet you ... for the kinda' stunning you miss, I must deceit ya' ... being with you is a top priority . . . ain't no need to question the authority ... Banita Apple Bun . . . you gotta' put me on, Banita Apple Bun said you gotta' put . . . me on. Banita Apple Bun, you gotta' put me on . . . Banita - Banita - Banita - Banita." As the bass line continued to

thump and Q-Tip spoke all the right words for the moment, I sat comfortably reclined in a passenger seat most noted for Bianca's position. Glancing causally at Bianca, she even looked sexy driving in a pair of nicely fitting black jeans and a N.S.U. sweater.

Arriving at the Chrysler Hall, we were late entering the comedy show and took seats in the mezzanine only catching about an hour more of it before its ending. It was over and people started to exit the hall at around ten p.m. . Terry, who sat snugged up on Malachi like she'd known him for years suggested that we go out to get something to eat.

"Perfect," I said, trying to prolong the night. "There's a restaurant on the beach called Alexander's on the Bay. Have either of you ever been there?"

"No," they replied simultaneously as Malachi also looked at me awkwardly.

"Okay, that settles it. Let's go there."

Alexander's on the Bay was a seafood restaurant that actually sat right on the shore of the ocean. I had never actually been inside of it myself, but I wasn't about to let them know that. When we were in the hotel room at the Radisson, there was a dining brochure on the night stand. Alexander's on the Bay stuck to my memory because I'd noticed the lights from it every time we were on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

As soon as we were all positioned back in the Mustang and Bianca started the car - "Thirty Six, Twenty Four, Thirty Seven ... You and Me together's like a match made in heaven ... Hey Bun, you're like a hip hop song ... Banita Apple Bun, you gotta' put

me on" - Bianca's stock car driving had us at the restaurant in less than fifteen minutes. I had made a mental note not to ever let her drive if I purchased a car.

We entered and were seated at a cozy table for four right at the window overlooking the midnight ocean. As I read the menu preparing to place my order, a Tony Montanish feeling came over me knowing that I had someone else's girl at my dinner table and I didn't even own a car. Everyone ordered seafood entrees and Malachi impressed us all by ordering a white Zinfindale wine. The waiter returned with a tall bottle and a corkscrew and popped the bottle right at our table before pouring each drink. I could tell that Bianca was really impressed and enjoying herself by the way she held the wine glass in her hand with her pinky finger extended while talking to me like she'd known me a lifetime.

At the end of the meal, the waiter brought us the check in an expensive velour looking folder and sat it on the edge of the table. Bianca reached for it ... "Damn," then put it back in its place on the table. I picked it up, opened it and smiled as I read the amount. One-Hundred and Eighty-One dollars. I gave Malachi some play and passed it to him. "Chi, can you take care of that? I'll get the next one."

"Sure, no problem," he said as he put two one hundred dollar bills in the folder and placed it back on the table.

Standing to leave the restaurant, Malachi asked Terry to grab the check and give it to our waiter as we walked out.

"Don't you want the change?" she asked, looking at Malachi with a "hold on" facial expression.

"It's nothing, don't worry about it Terry. That's his tip."

"Yeah Chi," I said to myself, watching him put his game down. P.Y.P. kid - Play Your Position!

We exited the restaurant and decided to stroll along the shore. Bianca's friend's Mustang was safely parked in the private parking lot for restaurant patrons only. Terry and Malachi walked in an opposite direction of Bianca and I. We all agreed to meet back at the car in a half hour. As Bianca and I strolled along the dimly lit shore with waves tumbling just feet away from our every step, we talked about D.C., New York, her friend and his possessive ways, as well as why I didn't have a girl and how I'm always late for class. She told me that she was an only child and her parents were still together and living in northwest D.C. Her mother worked at D.C. General Hospital and her father managed a hotel on Minnesota Avenue. When she decided to go away to college, her mother cried for days because she wanted her to attend Howard University and stay in the D.C. area.

The guy that she was seeing, Regg, was also from D.C. He had gotten caught cheating on her a few times but she forgave him each time after he would apologize and promise never to do it again. She told me how on more than one occasion he had hit her out of his own insecurities and that her parents couldn't stand him. She even elaborated on how she was really sexually frustrated because he was a selfish lover and he couldn't satisfy her. Why she decided to tell

me that, I do not know. But now, instead of a sheer attraction, I now possessed a lust with a vengeance.

As I watched Bianca's hips sway in her Edwin jeans, just tight enough to reveal her now famous panty line, we stopped at a highrise lifeguard chair, climbed it and sat side by side, looking into the world's water. I told her about how my mother and sister had left New York some years ago and moved down to the Carolinas, and also how I was raised by my aunt and my Pops who showed up from time to time and about me and Malachi's relationship. He was like a brother I never had and I was like a brother to him after his brother was murdered.

As we continued to converse, Bianca got comfortable and leaned over onto my shoulder, allowing me to catch the succulent scent of the Blvgari perfume she wore.

My hand unintentionally rested on Bianca's inner thigh and I felt her breathing begin to get heavier. As we sat silent for a moment, I began to feel like she belonged in my arms just as she is now. Just as I looked down at her, she looked up at me and our eyes met.

"Sedique, you have beautiful eyes."

"Thank you," I gratefully replied, not taking them off of her.

Let me get a good look inside of them. You know they say the eyes are the window to the soul."

If my eyes were windows right now, then she would surely see that my soul was as stiff as a rock and full of blood.

Bianca held my face and looked deeply into my

soul. She must've found what she was looking for because her breathing became even heavier and she began to lick my lips soft and sensuously. When I pulled her a little closer to me and began to rub her side, she closed her eyes, sighed and slid her tongue into my mouth with a newly discovered hope. I reciprocated and began to feel her and rub her inner thigh intently. For this to have been our first date, we both felt like we knew each other's wants, needs and desires way to well.

Time had escaped us and we were twenty minutes late getting back to the car. When we crept up on Malachi and Terry, they were up against the side of the car kissing each other.

"Look at you two freaks," Bianca said tiredly.

"Freaks! Excuse me, ya'll are twenty minutes late and you're looking rather exhausted hoe," Terry said in her own defense.

"Sedique, I don't feel like driving."

"Okay, well, I have a better idea."

"Oh really, and what is it?" asked Terry.

"Let's stay on the beach tonight."

"I'm down," Malachi said swiftly with a grin on his face.

"Bianca, do you want to?"

"I don't mind, but I'm not staying in a room with four people."

"I know you're not. You're staying in a room with one person, me."

We both smiled at each other.

The Holiday Inn Oceanfront was just a block away from the restaurant. We could've walked there but Bianca had to make sure the car was safe so we drove

and parked it in the hotel parking lot. We got two rooms on the tenth floor with the balcony facing the ocean. Malachi and Terry's room was two doors down from ours and if we read each other correctly, I would almost bet that we were thinking the same thing - (I'll let you hear the moaning two doors down).

Bianca and I entered our room and immediately kicked off our shoes. "Ohh, I'm so tired Sedique," she said as she grabbed the remote for the T.V. and layed opposite end on the bed. I sat on the end of the bed and watched as she scrolled through the channels.

Bianca crawled up and laid her head in my lap as we watched midnight love on BET playing Ralph Tresuant's video for "Can You Stand the Rain." I reclined back to make myself comfortable. The vibrations from Bianca's singing with her mouth seemingly on my thigh made me begin to stiffen up against the side of her head through my jeans. She noticed my erection and began to tease me.

"Damn Sedique, what's this?" she asked while pretending to bite me through my jeans.

"Go ahead Bianca, you did this to me," I answered while enjoying her teeth on me.

She stood and removed her jeans exposing her beautiful shape in a pair of red lace Victoria Secret panties.

"Sedique, I know you don't plan to sleep with your jeans on," she said before she pushed me back and straddled me, kissing me while grinding herself up against me. Before I could even answer, she unbuttoned my pants, unzipped me and stuck her hand down my pants beginning to massage my lowings and

caress my fully erected extension.

"Ummm, Sedique, I make you feel like this?" she whispered in her panting voice that crept between her breath. A second later she was standing at the foot of the bed, pulling my jeans off in her red panties and a N.S.U. sweatshirt with a t-shirt underneath. When she straddled me, I could feel the warmth between her legs as I tried to lift her sweatshirt over her head.

"No, not yet."

I continued to fondle her and lift up her sweatshirt, sucking on her erected nipples. Bianca pulled my shirt up over my head, tossed it over on the floor and began to lick me in circles from my chest and stomach to my belly button and down to my dick, holding it in her mouth through my boxers as she moaned. She pulled it out and began to kiss and lick circles around the head as if it were her savior before she plunged, making it disappear into the warmth of her mouth. I moaned as she went down to my balls and began to suck and pull on each of them with her tongue and mouth while jerking me with her hand.

"I shouldn't be doing this Sedique . . ."

"Shhiitt Bianca, you feel so good." I managed to get out as a truth and also motivation for her continuance. She came up and straddled me again only this time holding my stiffness as she filled her warm wet pussy with it.

"Oh Sedique, I'm so wet," she sighed as she sat all the way down and began riding me while blushing with pleasure. I caressed her ass, realizing that she still had on the satin red panties and looked down to see that she had simply slid them over to the side.

Once I held her firmly, I began to arch my back and thrust up into her while pulling her down into me. Her eyes rolled as she leaned herself back and covered her mouth to muffle her moans, yet mount me continuously.

"Oh God Sedique!"

I reached up to remove her sweatshirt but she put my hands under it and on her breast.

"Oh ... I'm gonna' come boy!" Bianca then rose up off of me and removed her soaked panties completely. I slid my boxers all the way off and flung them in the chair beside the bed. She laid on her back and opened her legs wide, exposing the prettiest pussy I had ever laid eyes on. She grabbed me and pulled me into her. She was so wet that her inner thighs were drenched from her own moisture. As I entered, her moans resurfaced and her pussy made a farting noise. She began to thrust herself into me while clawing my back, then arched so I could go deeper.

Her eyes were closed as she blushed and began to remove her N.S.U. sweatshirt.

"Oh fuck me Sedique."

The sweater was thrown on the floor and she wore only a t-shirt, which read "Show Time" on it with a picture of the Apollo Theater.

Bianca lost total control of her tongue trying to kiss me as I continued to fuck her until we both exploded.

"Damn, Sedique. Why didn't I meet you a long time ago?"

"Shit, I wish I would've met you a long time ago too," I replied as I lay inside of her. Moments later, we were both asleep.

The next morning, I checked my beeper; it had

eight pages six from Dre and two from Jeff. I called both of them back and told them that we'd be back on the campus in an hour. Check out time was eleven o'clock and it was only eight forty-five so we had time to stop and get breakfast.

When I looked up, I saw Bianca standing in the mirror with the t-shirt on that read "Harlem" on the back and no panties on. I went over and hugged her from behind while reaching to grab the complimentary toothbrush that the hotel provided beside the sinks. As I leaned forward, she was very receptive and pushed herself back into me while looking at me through the mirror.

"You're nasty Sedique," she said as I slid inside of her invitation. The word "Harlem" raced back and forth from my morning eyes as I came and almost collapsed on Bianca's back. She reached her arm around her neck, pulling my face to hers and kissed me.

"Now brush your teeth so we can get out of here. I told Terry to meet us down stairs in twenty minutes."

Afterwards, we showered, got dressed and checked out of the hotel, meeting Terry and Malachi in the lobby.

From that point on, Bianca and Terry were ours.

"SOO...SO...DEF"

The ride back to the campus was a silent cruise. No one had to say anything. It was written all over our faces, not to mention the fact that although they both tried to camouflage it, Bianca and Terry's hair were a total wreck.

Entering our dormitory that morning, our dorm room never seemed so vacant. Even though it was assigned to Malachi and I and was included in our tuition rate, due to our new found profession we seldom stayed there.

"Yo Chi, Dique," someone yelled from outside. When I walked over to our window, Jeff was yelling up at us.

"What's up Jeff? Come up."

Jeff came up to our room and began to tell us how between the three spots, Dre picked up almost ten thousand for us last night and that he had some weight sales so he should have at least another ten thousand for us by tonight. After everything was counted and recounted, it was concluded that there was a little over twenty thousand worth of coke left.

Judging by the way things were going, we could easily off that over the Thanksgiving break.

Quickly changing the subject, Jeff asked us both about our night last night. I smiled at the question because I'd been wanting to ask Malachi the same question myself.

"Jeff," I spoke first. "Let me just put it to you this way. If all of the girls in the Nation's Capitol fuck like Bianca, then we gotta' pay D.C. a real visit!"

Malachi smiled, "Word up! Terry fucked me all morning and then when I was tired and sleepy she locked onto my balls like a pit until I literally passed out!"

"Oh word?" Jeff and I remarked at the same time.

"It's that go-go music upbringing," Jeff added. "I'm convinced that those D.C. chicks will screw a niggas brains out listening to that shit."

Just as he finished his statement, Malachi's beeper went off. "Its Dre."

Chi went out in the hallway to use the pay phone while Jeff continued to interrogate me about whether or not Bianca's sex was really that good. Returning to the conversation, Malachi walked straight up to us and asked Jeff exactly how much money we had together.

"The ten thousand I picked up from Dre, plus the six thousand that Fred did. Sixteen thousand in total, why?"

Malachi, recounting what he had collected minus the dinner and hotel rooms on the beach came up with ninety-three hundred dollars.

"Okay, in total, that's almost twenty-five thousand, plus we have twenty thousand in work left."

"Yeah ... and?" I asked Malachi.

"And ... I'm tired of pulling over or having to run to the fucking pay phones. Let's go."

"Go where?"

"Back to the mall to get us some cell phones and then back to the room where the work is."

"What about class Chi? Or did you forget we're in college?"

"Class?!" Malachi grinned as he held the money out in his hands. "Twenty-five thousand, three-hundred dollars. This is class!"

I looked at Jeff. Jeff looked at me. We both looked at Malachi. "Fuck it. Let's be out."

Four cell phones. richer back in the hotel room where the work was. We were like kids in a candy store, calling each other from phone to phone in the same room. The fourth phone was for Dre'. We planned to surprise him with it.

The first person I called on my new phone was Bianca to give her my new number. When I called, Terry was right there and Malachi gave her his cell number as well. Bianca told me that one of her boyfriend's friends saw us out at the comedy show together last night and told him, and that he called and left a threatening message on her answering machine. Something about having some New York niggas riding around in his car. She continued to tell me that she was packing to go home for the Thanksgiving break and that she was breaking up with him over the holiday.

"Sedique, I'll be back next week. Will I see you when I come back?" She asked in the sweetest D.C. accent. "I was looking for you all day on campus to tell you this but I couldn't find you.

"You'll see me," I replied reassuringly. "No doubt Bianca. You'll see me. Just dial my number as soon as you return."

"Are you going home for Thanksgiving?"

"Nah ..., me and the fellas have a few things to take care of so I'll be right here for the most part. I might shoot down to North Carolina to see my mother for a day or so, but that's about it."

"Okay, by Sedique. I'll call you as soon as I get back, okay?"

"Okay, you have the number. Have a safe trip."

When I hung up the phone, I told Malachi what Bianca had just told me about her soon-to-be ex-boyfriend beefing with her about having us up in his joint.

"Sedique, you know ya'll were wrong," Jeff interjected.

"Wrong?" Malachi yelled. "Jeff, what the fuck is wrong with you? She's the one that picked us up."

I looked at Jeff silently with a stupid face thinking to myself this guy is as square as a two by four. Now I see why he wears that flat top hair cut.

"Listen. What's done is done and I don't regret it one bit. Do you Malachi?"

"Hell no. And no Mustang driving nigga better not say nothing to me or you. As a matter of fact, let's make a move real quick."

"A move? Where?" Jeff and I asked in unison.

"A & P Arms in Hampton on Mercury Boulevard. You know where that is, right Jeff?"

"Yeah, but what are we going there for? That's a gun store."

"To buy some water guns stupid. What do you think we're going there for? To buy some heat!"

"Malachi, how in the hell do you plan to buy some heat when you can't even buy a Hieneken from 7-11?"

Malachi pulled out his wallet and flipped it open. "What do you think this is?" He asked, smiling as he revealed an official Virginia State fake identification card.

"Yeah Dique. I got the hook-up and for five hundred, both of you can get them too. Now let's go!"

Arriving and stepping into A & P Arms we were in gun heaven. Any gun that you wanted was showcased in glass counters like fine jewelry. Malachi purchased two Glock nineteen nine millimeters like he was buying two packs of Jolly Rancher's candy. Virginia didn't give a fuck. They sold guns and bullets right over the counter. The only glitch was that you could only purchase two at a time. Not a bad glitch considering the fact that had Jeff and I had fake I. D. 's, we could've walked out of the store with six brand new guns with ammunition.

A few years later after they allowed all the guns on the streets, they passed a law called "Project Exhile" in an attempt to get their weapons back. Anybody caught with a gun that had a previous felony were federally charged and faced a mandatory minimum sentence in Federal Prison. The law had such an affect that over a two year period almost all fifty states adopted it.

After the guns were purchased I beeped Dre' on my cell phone as we headed back to Norfolk. Within three minutes my phone was ringing.

"What's up Sedique?"

"Dre, what's up? Do you have a pen near you? I need you to write down these numbers." I gave him

Malachi's number first, then Jeff's and told him that mine was the one on his beeper that he'd just dialed. "And Dre, we have a cell phone for you too. Once we meet up, I'll give it to you."

"Okay, cool. No problem. Shit is going pretty smooth today so I'll probably need some more work by tonight. I'll call you when I'm ready."

"All right kid. Be safe ... ONE." I ended the conversation with Dre just as we were entering the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel on our way back to our room to stash the guns.

Bianca, what are you going to do? You know Regg is going to flip. I knew we shouldn't of went to that Def Comedy shit. One of his friends would just have to see us there of all people.

"Girl listen, I'm kind of glad he did see us to be perfectly honest. You know he's been caught out there numerous times. Anyway, as soon as I get home, I'm breaking up with his ass."

"You're what?"

"You heard me. When I come back to school, he'll be a thing of the past."

"Mmmmm, Sedique must've put something real special on your ass. I know I wore Malachi's ass out!"

"Terry, you just met him. How you gonna' fuck him on the first night. I asked you not to make me look bad."

"Bitch, cut the bullshit. I didn't make you look bad and I didn't fuck him on the first night. Okay?"

"Oh, I was about to say you was a real hoe."

"I didn't fuck him last night Bianca, but four o'clock this morning I rolled over on that dick and rode it until sunrise. I'm a grown woman and if I want to suck a blood vessel out of a brand new dick then that's my perogative. Now tell me all about Mr. Sedique."

"Oh my God Terry. That boy had me so wet. We were just sitting in the lifeguard chair talking and looking out at the ocean, and shit was running all down my inner thighs. By the time we got into our hotel room I was no more good."

"So you finally got a good piece, huh hoe?"

"Terry, I can't even explain it. He's so sweet. I did a lot more than got mine. I haven't came that good in my entire life."

"Damn girl. Slow down. You're making me wet, shit."

"And listen to this, when we woke up this morning I made sure I was pantyless and in the mirror leaning forward so he could get a morning glimpse of this ass. He did just what I wanted him to do."

"What?"

"Girl, he came over and broke me off from the back early in the morning. I watched him through the mirror until both of us went blank."

"You told him about the message that asshole left on your answering machine, right?"

"No, not exactly. I just told him that Regg left a threatening message about being in his car."

"And what did he say?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing. What the hell do you mean, nothing?"

"What was he supposed to say Terry. Damn. I told

him that I was packing to go home for the break and that I was breaking up with Regg when I got home. He said for me to make sure I called him when I got back. You were right beside me when I was talking to him on the phone. You heard everything."

"So...., are you and Sedique going to be an item?"

"I don't know. Are you and Malachi?"

"I hope so. I really like him Bianca."

"I like Sedique a lot too. We're compatible."

"Well, we all ready know how he feels about you. He's been sweating you since the first day of class. You know I would really like to see you two together. I am so glad you're leaving that damn nutcase Regg."

"Girl, help me finish packing. I am ready to get this over with."

"Bianca. When we come back you and Sedique had better straighten all of this out once and for all. You like him and he likes you. That's that. As for me and Malachi, I got that. Watch my work."

Five days had gone by and Bianca was back from the short Thanksgiving break. She told me that she'd broken up with Regg and wanted to see me tonight.

As we continued to conversate over my cellular phone, my pager went off and Malachi's cell number was on it.

"Bianca, stay right there. I'll call you right' back. Malachi just beeped me and I need to call him real quick."

"Sedique, you better call me back. Terry's not back yet and I don't want to be cooped up in this room."

"Give me three minutes and I'll call you right back, okay?"

"Okay."

I dialed Malachi's number and he picked up before his phone even rang.

"Chi, what's up? You beeped me?"

"Yeah, where are you?"

"I'm in Hampton with Jeff. We both got rooms at the Sheraton for the day just to relax and chill out."

"Did Dre call you?"

"Yeah, he called me last night and told me that he was with you and that everything was just about finished. Why?"

"Sedique, Fred got busted on Fifteenth Street last night."

"Oh shit," I yelled back at Malachi.

"Word. Lucky for us he all ready gave me what he owed us."

"So what did he get busted with then?"

"You know that super hustling mutha fucka was tapping the work making dimes for himself," Malachi stated as he laughed.

"Yo Chi, stop hanging out there on the block so much kid."

"Yeah, you're right Dique. The jump out cop had me up against the car patting me down and questioning me for ten minutes straight. Some robo cop white guy named Richard Broffman.

"What!? What did he ask you? Did he take the money?"

"No Sedique, stop worrying. I had it rolled up real tight with a rubber band around it and stashed in the soda can that I pretended to drink from."

We both laughed.

"I love you kid," I told Malachi before asking him, "Where are you anyway?"

"I'm back at the Holiday Inn Ocean Front on the Twentieth Floor. After that episode last night, I needed to relax. That jump out cop is really a bitch."

"Yeah I heard. Dre told me about that one."

"Yo, have you heard from Bianca yet?"

"Yeah, I had to hang up with her so I could call you. She's back on the campus in her room. What about you? Any word from Terry?"

"Yeah, she's in the shower right now. She called me from the bus station and I had her take a cab down here."

I laughed and smiled to myself.

"What about Jeff," Chi continued, "Where's Jeff?"

"He's up in his room on the sixth floor with some slim pretty chick named Trina that goes to H.U. with him. I'm about to take his car to go pick Bianca up. I'll call you later."

"Okay playa, I'll call Dre and find out what's what."

626-1319 I dialed as fast as I could. "Bianca?"

"Yes Sedique."

"What are you doing?"

"Mainly just sitting looking cute, waiting for you to call me back. You said three minutes Sedique."

"Okay, give or take three more," I replied while laughing. "I'm coming to pick you up."

"Pick me up in what?"

"I'm taking Jeff's car to come get you."

"And where are you taking me?"

"I'm in the Sheraton in Hampton. Malachi and Terry are back in the Holiday Inn."

"That hoe. How do you know she's with Malachi?"

"He just told me. I told you I had to call him. He had her take a cab from the bus station. I'll be there in a half hour."

"A half hour! Why so long Sedique?"

"I'm in Hampton girl. I'm leaving right now. You time it," I said as I concluded our conversation and headed out the door.

Twenty six minutes later, when I pulled up to the N.S.U. "Booty Gate," Bianca was standing there waiting for me. As soon as she got in she leaned over and kissed me.

"I'm hungry Dique," she stated while rubbing the back of my head.

Before returning to my hotel room, we stopped at Captain D's. I went up to Jeff's room and gave him the two seafood platters that I'd picked up for him and Trina. Judging from the heat and the aroma in his room when Jeff opened the door in his boxers, I had concluded that Jeff had probably just finished eating the seafood platter of the redbone he had in there with him.

Bianca and I headed to my room where we ate dinner and discussed the fact that the Christmas break was only two weeks away. I told her that I'd be spending a week in New York and then a few days with my mother and sister. Afterward, when we came back, me, Jeff and Malachi were moving into a three bed-

room townhouse in Virginia Beach. When she heard townhouse in Virginia Beach she almost choked on her shrimp.

After dinner Bianca asked if I wanted desert while on the very next breath telling me she needed her hair done.

"Bianca, your hair looks nice. It looks like you just got it done." I told her as she laid back on the bed in her short wool skirt and knee high boots, slightly opening her legs and pulling it up just enough to expose the fact that she was pantyless.

"Sedique, can you do my hair for me?"

I looked at her as she arched her back and blew a kiss in my direction. Not even a second later desert was served and I feasted on Bianca as she moaned and screwed my tongue while grabbing the back of my head. Bianca arched her back higher and sighed as she fed me continuously until she collapsed and released leaving a wet spot on the comforter.

"Boom, boom, boom."

"Yo Dique," Jeff yelled as he knocked on my door. "I need my car keys. I'm taking Trina to the mall.

Why did he say that? "The Mall?" Bianca asked, still spawn out on the bed with her skirt up and boots still on. "Can we go too?"

"Damn girl. I thought you were asleep."

"Pleeeese, ... I need some new Vickies."

Enough said. We were out the door.

"Jeff, we're riding with you, okay?"

"Yeah, let's go," he stated while covering his nose and laughing as I talked to him through the cracked door.

As we headed towards the Coliseum Mall, Bianca kept smelling my breath and whispered, "Sedique, you forgot to brush your teeth." She ran her tongue in and out of my mouth and over my lips while smiling. "There, that should do it," she said then pecked me on my cheek.

Jeff laughed as he watched us through the rear view mirror.

"Mind your business boy," Trina said, tapping Jeff on the back of his head.

"Yo Dique, did you enjoy your Captain B's, I mean Captain D's?"

"Yeah," I replied. "How was your seafood Trina. Ooops, I mean seafood platter?" Everyone in the car laughed.

We arrived at the mall and headed straight to Victoria's Secrets. I watched Bianca's thighs protrude from her skirt as she walked in front of me with Trina and got excited all over again knowing she was pantyless underneath. Trina wore a tan colored pair of stretch pants and I caught myself looking at her ass wondering if she was bare underneath those also.

Entering Victoria's Secret, Jeff and I both laughed at the sight of those two holding up panties, bras, nighties, thongs, garders and some other shit that neither of us recognized.

The total once we reached the counter - three hundred and twenty dollars! I looked at Jeff. "You know what? It seems like the more money you have, the more expensive pussy becomes. Weren't we just broke a few months ago?"

Just as we paid for all of the underwear, Jeff's phone rang.

" Hello, ... Malachi, what's up?"

"Malachi, that's Malachi," Bianca stated. "Let me speak to Terry."

"Okay, tell him we'll see him tonight," I heard Jeff say before asking, "Yo, is Terry with you? Bianca wants to speak to her... yeah, Sedique's right here. We're at the Coliseum Mall in Hampton," then handed Bianca the phone.

"I see you crept on me, huh slut?... I took the train back. I couldn't wait to get away from that asshole." Bianca continued. "We're in Victoria's Secrets. I needed some new underclothes."

"I need some too girl. Pick me up some," Terry must've said before they hung up because as soon as she ended her conversation with Terry the slut, Bianca turned to me, "Boo, Terry needs a couple of sets."

"Oh, it's Boo now huh?" I said to myself. Another one hundred and ten dollars. Jeff and I both shook our heads laughing and Jeff told me that Dre had just called Malachi and told him that the last 10 g's worth of work was finished.

Classes resumed on Tuesday and everyone was back in their dorm room. Dre had given us the ten thousand that same night and said he was collecting another ten in the morning.

That Friday night we sat in our dorm room and counted forty three thousand dollars. Three thousand dollars short of what our mark was due to agreeable expenditures. The following week was the end of the semester and time to re-up.

"True To The Game"

The semester was over right before the Christmas Holiday. We hit New York City thirty-three thousand strong in two Alpha Romeo sports cars. A champagne colored one with tan leather interior and a black one with light silhouette tints on it and black interior.

Jeff and Malachi went to A and G Auto on Virginia Beach Boulevard and put five thousand a piece down on the two cars before we left. I rode up with Chi deciding that I'd wait until after our next flip to purchase my car.

Pulling up on 122nd Street two Milanos deep, we felt like three of the most over idealized drug dealers in Harlem. They all were older than us. One was shot up and lived. One was eventually murdered by the other who ended up serving a federal sentence. When we pulled up, everybody on the block looked at the cars with the red and white paper tags on the back and Virginia spelled across the top. Ruben was standing in front of the building talking to Alex when he

recognized us and came over to the cars with a big smile on his face.

"It must be all right down there in Virginia," he stated while checking out the joints. "Sedique, where's yours?"

"I didn't pick mine up yet," I lied. "The rims didn't come in yet so I don't want to drive it," I added while fronting in my coolest most grateful tone.

We all sat outside and talked for a minute. "Yo fellas, I'm going uptown to see the family. I'll call tomorrow. Maybe we'll hit the rink or something."

"All right Jeff," I answered, giving him a pound and a hug. Malachi did the same thing and Jeff jumped in his joint and peeled off.

"Yo Rube, you seen Hap?"

"Na, you didn't beep him?"

"Na, it's the holiday break and I was coming up anyway so I didn't bother. I'll call him when I go upstairs."

Malachi's cousin Ni'chelle walked out of the building noticing the three of us talking. "Sedique, nice to see you."

"Hi Ni'chelle," I replied as she hugged Malachi while looking me up and down. Ni'chelle was six years older than me and although I had heard that she fucks with younger guys, I just know I didn't see what I thought I'd seen.

"Did Ni'chelle just wink at you Sedique?" Rube asked in a jealous tone of voice.

"Please, ... wink at me? For what? She's fucking with Angelo still isn't she? Plus, she's almost seven years older than me. She doesn't want me."

"Rube," Malachi interrupted. "You're still sweating my cousin, aren't you?"

Ni'chelle was older but she had a body that wouldn't quit. She was the prototype of how the panty line was supposed to accent the ass properly in a pair of jeans. Girls in Harlem are known for knowing how to get in a pair of tight jeans and Ni'chelle was a striding instructor for anyone that didn't.

"Chi, I'm going upstairs. I'll get at you later. Come up or something."

"Hold on Dique. I'm going up too," Malachi replied before we both gave Ruben a pound and a hug and walked into the building.

" Malachi, who's got the money?" I quietly asked him while waiting for the elevator.

"Jeff has it."

"Good."

The elevator arrived and we went up. Malachi got off on his floor and after riding up with him; I came back down to mine. My two little cousins, Keith and Kevin were in the hallway playing when they saw me and ran up to me each hugging a leg.

"Take me to Virginia. Take me to Virginia," they both pleaded as I walked to fourteen G with them on my legs. The commotion began as soon as I opened the door to the apartment. My entire family was spread throughout the apartment, everyone into something.

"Damn," I whispered to myself. "Maybe I am living pretty good down in Virginia."

"Come 'er boy and give your auntee a kiss," my Aunt Freckles said in her southern drawl.

We all called her Freckles because she was the only one in the family with Freckles on her face. She was fifty-one years old and she was from Durham, North

Carolina but moved to Harlem with her mother when she was just fourteen.

I kissed my Aunt Freckles and walked through the apartment to see everybody else. My cousin Bishop was in the room with his girlfriend watching a Knick's game. My Pops was in the front room on the couch asleep. After making my temporary presence known, I picked up the phone to beep Happy. I dialed his number and after the third beep, entered my Aunt's phone number followed by code 122.

Five minutes later, Hap called back.

"Dique, what's poppin'?"

"What's up Hap? I just saw Ruben downstairs and asked for you. He didn't know where you were."

"Yeah, I know. He called me a minute ago and told me that ya' pulled up on the block in two new joints."

"Yeah, Malachi and Jeff copped two Alpha Romeo's. I didn't get a car yet though."

"So how much do you have?"

"Where are you?" I asked, intentionally disregarding his question.

"I'm at Sheryl's house in Johnson. Why?"

"Because Hap, Aunt Freckles said 'Hi.' She's standing right here." I said hoping he'd catch on.

"Oh, okay. Come down to Johnson. You remember where Sheryl's building is don't you?"

"Yeah ..., I'll be down there in a minute."

Johnson projects were down Lexington Avenue on One Hundred Fifteenth Street. I was on One Twenty Second so the seven block stroll was a quick one. Once I got down to 116th Street, I looked up in the House of Style and there was Angel right in the win-

dow, legs wide open doing some girl's nails. When I reached Johnson, Malachi's cousin Ni'chelle was heading back uptown when she spotted me talking to Hap in front of Sheryl's building.

"Sedique, come here for a minute," she asked.

I excused myself from Hap and walked over to her.

"What's up Ni'chelle?"

"You know I don't live in the building anymore, right? I live over on Second Avenue now. I got my own apartment on 102nd Street about three months ago."

"Oh word. That's good Ni'chelle, but why did you call me over here to tell me this. You could've told Malachi and he would've eventually told me."

"Well maybe I didn't want to tell Malachi before I told you," she said as I looked at her and smiled. "Maybe I want you to come and visit me."

I looked at Ni'chelle and then at her body. "What's your building number and apartment?"

"204, apartment 3A, and bring a house warming gift."

"Ni'chelle really has her picks and she can smell money a mile away. She broke Angelo's heart about six months ago when he found out she was fucking some cat uptown on 146th Street," Hap said when I approached him. "Anyway, back to business. How much are you spending?"

"We have thirty thousand Hap."

"What!? Two cars and thirty thousand off of one fucking brick!"

"Yea, what can I get for thirty?"

"Yo Sedique, you're not playing, are you kid?"

"Not at all Hap. Dont' forget, I knew you way before you had the money to buy your whole crew those

Acura Integras. We're fam and since you won't give me a hundred thousand, which I know you have ten times over, I'm going to earn it - thanks to you. Now what can I get for thirty?"

"Three. Three bricks." Hap replied as I almost fainted.

"But I'm giving them to you on one condition Sedique, you owe me eighteen thousand back. I'm giving them to you for sixteen a piece."

"Bet. When and where?"

"Meet me at the barbershop at nine-thirty tomorrow morning and do not show up in none of those cars with them Virginia tags."

"Okay, not a problem," I replied, all ready figuring that Jeff would have to bring the money to us tonight and we'd walk down to the barbershop tomorrow morning then take a cab back up to Jeff's house on 233rd with the coke.

"Yo Sedique, how long are staying in the city?"

"I'll be here for a few days at least, then we're out. I have to get back down, plus we're moving into a townhouse next month.

"Okay, I'll see you tomorrow morning. I'm going back upstairs now. Don't forget, nine-thirty sharp."

"I'll be there Hap, trust me."

Everything went as planned at the barbershop the next morning and the work was transported via cab safely back uptown to Jeff's house. We now possessed three kilos and three thousand dollars. Later that day we each took a thousand dollars a piece and hit the street showing off our new official out of town look by riding back to back in two crisp joints with Virginia paper tags.

We went down to the Leather Outlet on 34th Street and Seventh Avenue and picked up three jackets.

Jeff suggested that we go into Macy's to buy some Christmas gifts since we were all ready downtown. While we were in Macy's, Malachi and I purchased two women's Sergio Tachinni sweat suits; one for Bianca and one for Terry. Jeff was over in the fragrance department purchasing cologne for himself and perfume for Trina.

By the time we got back uptown, Malachi was tired and wanted to get some sleep. We pulled up to the block and he got out and went inside the building with a Macy's bag full of wrapped gifts inside. I jumped in the driver's seat and Jeff and I hit 145th Street and Eighth Avenue, parking in front of Willy Burger while Humpty and Fingers, who were known for washing cars right there on the street, detailed both joints for us.

After the cars were cleaned, we crossed the 145th Street Bridge. Jeff wanted to go check on his ex-girlfriend Sharice who lived in the Bronx over on Clay Avenue and 166th Street not far from the "Daughter's of Jacob's Hospital."

When Sharice came outside I looked twice doing a doubletake. Jeff kept himself a stable of small-framed red bone chicks.

"Yo Jeff," I pulled up beside his driver's side window. "I'm out. I see you might be a minute. I'll call you tonight. We might hit Goucho's Gym. Same Gang is playing Mecca Audio tonight and there's an after party at Harlem Heat on the West Side."

"Okay, later. Just hit me and let me know what's up."

I pulled off and shot over to Third Avenue heading back downtown. Reaching 149th Street, I spotted Ni'chelle at the bus stop waiting for the bus. Once the light changed I pulled up to the stop and offered her a ride.

"Is this your car Sedique?" Ni'chelle asked positioning her belongings between her legs on the passenger side floor.

"Nah, mine isn't ready yet," I lied again. "This is your cousin's car.

"Malachi's! Oh, you all must really be doing well down there in Virginia, huh Sedique?" she inquired while looking at me intensely.

"We're okay. Schools okay, so I guess you can say it's a lot different than the congested city life. Where are you going?" I asked approaching the Third Avenue Bridge.

"Oh, I'm not going to the building. I'm going to my place." Ni'chelle stated as she reclined comfortably with her legs opened around a Walbounds bag full of toiletries.

I glanced over at her and took the FDR exit south to 102nd Street where Ni'chelle lived. Once I got to 96th Street I exited off and took First Avenue back up to 102nd Street.

"Come up Sedique. I told you I lived by myself now. I want you to see my place. Pull up in the parking garage so you won't have to leave Malachi's car parked out on the street."

I pulled into the garage, parked and proceeded upstairs into Ni'chelle's apartment.

"Sedique, make yourself comfortable," she stated

as she carried her stuffed bag into her bedroom. "Rest your jacket, I don't bite. The remote control is on top of the T.V.," she yelled from her bedroom.

"Ni'chelle, what do you have to drink? I'm thirsty."

"Look in the refrigerator, there should be something in there."

I walked into the kitchen and opened her refrigerator door. "Whose Heinekens are these?"

"Whose do you think? Mine. Go ahead, take one."

I rested my jacket and flipped through some T.V. channels while sipping my Heineken. "Yo Ni'chelle, this is nice. I like the black and white look and the one red rose in this black vase looks real seductive."

"I'm glad you like it. Thanks. Black and red are my favorite colors. Sedique, I've been running around all day. I'm about to take a quick shower. You can join me if you want."

When I looked up, Ni'chelle was standing at her bathroom door in a short black satin robe with one red rose on it under her initials "N.E." - Ni'chelle Edwards. I blinked and spilled Heineken on my pants as I watched the initials "N.E." fall to the floor leaving Ni'chelle braless in a pair of black panties.

"It's up to you. I told you, I don't bite."

"I thought rapidly to myself for a second, "What the hell?"

Entering the bathroom, Ni'chelle was standing right inside the door. "I was hoping you would join me," she said while pulling my shirt over my head as I removed my jeans, sneakers and boxers. Ni'chelle stood directly in front of me staring straight in my eyes as she removed her panties one leg at a time. Her

body was as firm and tight outside of clothes as it appeared to be inside. As we stepped into the steamy shower, she handed me her washcloth. "Wash my back for me Sedique," she asked as she stood in front of me, exposing the butterfly tattoo on her left shoulder.

I soaped up her cloth and began to gently wash her back.

"Go down a little, " she sighed as she clutched both of her hands behind her neck locking her fingers. I washed her lower back and noticed the ribbon tattoo on the small of her back just above the most womanly ass I'd seen in my twenty years. As I started to wash the ribbon, Ni'chelle bent over and raised herself up in the air, leaning forward now balancing herself with her hands on the wall.

"Wash it for me Sedique," she pleaded as I soaped her cloth again and began to wash up in her ass and into her womanly pussy as she moaned. The water trickled down her back through the split of her mountain and up into her valley. As Ni'chelle enjoyed her cleaning, I squatted behind her and ran my tongue between her legs and into her cave, resting it on her clitoris.

"Boy, what are you doing?" she managed to sigh as she raised her left leg to rest it on the side of the bathtub.

I totally ignored her now feasting on her love button.

"Ooohhh shit, Sedique," she moaned now, shaking and unbalanced. "Take it."

I stood up behind her now fully erected as she reached behind herself grabbing me and pressing me gently but firmly up against her entrance.

"Take it Sedique," she sighed, pushing herself back into me and filling her asshole slowly but surely.

Once I was all the way in, Ni'chelle let out a relaxing sigh as she bent completely over and positioned her hands on the bathtub floor. I held her waist, pulling her into me with every deep stroke I offered.

"Ohhh ... fuck. Don't stop Sedique. Just like that."

The more she moaned, the harder I began to thrust. When she felt me about to come, she pulled away, turned around and kneeled down, taking me in her mouth relentlessly as the steamy water poured over us, sucking and jerking me at the same time while demanding me to come. When I released, she closed her mouth and sucked tighter, swallowing every time my muscles contracted and released.

"Okay, so I lied a little - I do bite, but that wasn't too bad was it?"

I continued to quiver as she stood in front of me rubbing my shoulders and washing my chest until I was sane and erected again. I grabbed Ni'chelle's leg, lifted it, held her up against the shower wall and went in for more. This time into the tunnel of her moistness.

We went over to the toilet and she straddled me facing the opposite direction, slamming her pussy into me as she balanced herself with her hands on the floor.

I was about to erupt again and grabbed Ni'chelle's ass in a dead lock grip as I bored into her. She cursed and begged me to slap her ass and pull her hair calling me all types of mutha fuckas while talking to her own pussy in a third party. "Oh fuck that pussy you handsome mutha fucka - oh shit - fuck it Sedique - come in that pussy."

I exploded and leaned back on the toilet looking at Ni'chelle strangely.

"Oh my God Sedique, " Ni'chelle said as she smiled at me while looking in the mirror.

"Hey ..., you asked me to bring you a house warming gift, right? I hope that was warm enough for you."

"Damn boy," she said staring at me curiously confused. "You tried to kill my Kitty."

"Nah ..., not at all. I just want to make sure I leave a lasting impression."

"I heard that Daddy," she replied while drying herself off.

"I gotta' run Ni'chelle. We might hit Gouchos tonight so I gotta' see what's up with Malachi and Jeff, and listen, I won't be the first to say anything about this. It's up to you. This is between me and you."

"Whatever you say Sedique. You're lucky I wanted to fuck you because you wouldn't be fucking me and cutting out the door that quick."

I dried off, got dressed and Ni'chelle walked me to the door.

"Sedique."

"Yeah Ni'chelle?"

"Whenever you want to, you can always ring my buzzer."

"Thanks, I'll keep that in mind."

When I went back to my building to check Malachi, he was knocked out sleeping but woke up long enough to say he wasn't going out tonight.

I called Jeff and heard Sharice in the background say something like "hang the phone up." Jeff wasn't going out tonight I'd concluded.

After my attempts, I did twenty-five pushups, ten jumpin' jacks and the next best thing. I headed back down to 102nd Street and rang Ni'chelle's buzzer.

The holiday break had ended and we were back in Virginia with two new joints, three new butter-soft leathers and more importantly, three kilos.

Knowing that we would need more outlets to move all of the work, we maintained our current three spots and opened up another spot in Portsmouth, a city located only ten minutes away from the campus in the opposite direction of Virginia Beach. Everything that we'd planned worked out fine. The townhouse was nice plus we copped a little apartment to keep the work in.

Classes began and when Malachi and I pulled up on the campus in his champagne colored Milano, all heads turned. Later that afternoon when Jeff came over to the campus' Student Union Building and parked behind Malachi's car, guys started eyescrewing and hating and girls started waving and smiling. We had never known that so many girls knew our names.

"Hey Sedique." "Hi Malachi," they all spoke.

Bianca beeped me and put a 201 area code in followed by a number and her code - one. Just as I was about to walk into the Student Union Building, a brown skinned bowlegged girl wearing a pair of silver stretch pants and some light blue and white track sneakers walked by me with a walk that was so nasty.

It looked like her right leg wanted to automatically cockup and wrap around you with each step she took.

"Excuse me. What's your name?"

"Melanie," she answered as she continued to go in her own direction.

"Melanie, do you have a number?"

"I do, but I don't think my man would agree with me giving it out," she replied as she smiled and kept moving.

"Yo Dique, that's Slug's girl from the Bronx."

"Who in the fuck is Slug?" I asked Malachi while staring at her bowlegged walk.

"Slug runs with them cats Hip Hop and Capone that drive the Acura that we saw earlier."

"Yo Chi," I stated as I checked my beeper to see Bianca's number on it again. "I want that kid."

"What about Bianca?"

"What about her?"

"202-581-8071-911-1."

"Damn. She's blowing my beeper up right now," I told Malachi while dialing Bianca's number.

"Hello."

"What took you so long to call me back Sedique?"

"I know you're on the campus. My girlfriend just called me and told me that you, Jeff and Malachi are in some new cars. And why didn't you answer your cell phone?" she continued in her interrogation.

"Bianca, I had something to take care of and I turned my phone off. I called you back as soon as I could Boo."

"Well, I'll be back tomorrow. My bus gets in at eleven o'clock so pick me up from the bus station."

"Guess what? We moved into our new townhouse

and I brought you a gift back. I'll see you tomorrow at eleven on the dot."

When I hung up my flip phone, I turned to see Terry leaning up against Malachi on the trunk of his car. "Bitch" I thought to myself, knowing that she was the one that called Blanca and told her we were on the campus.

"Chi, someone's spying on us on the campus. Let's bounce kid."

" Spying? What do you mean spying? How do you know?"

"Because Bianca just called me screaming for nothing," I said looking at Terry to let her know I knew who the spy was.

"Word? What did she say?"

"She knew we were parked out here in these cars and she'll be back tomorrow morning at eleven o'clock."

"Oh," Terry interrupted, grinning from ear to ear. "So we know where you'll be tomorrow morning, don't we Sedique?"

I looked at Terry, shook my head and walked over to Jeff ' s car.

Jeff was obviously giving Trina the directions to our new place because when I sat in his passenger seat, he immediately covered his phone and whispered, "Trina's coming over tonight. She has the Honda."

As soon as he hung up with Trina, his phone rang again. "Yo, it's Dre," Jeff stated. "Dre, what's up playa?" ... "Okay, give us twenty minutes. We'll be right there ..."

"Dique, Dre is at the car lot and wants us to meet him there." "Yo Chi," Jeff yelled back at the lovebirds. "We're going to meet Dre. He just called."

"Jeff, do me a favor. Drop me off at the house first. I'm tired. I want to go get some rest."

"Dique. You heard me just tell Dre twenty minutes. We don't have time to drop you off. Go to sleep."

Jeff hit his horn and started his car. As he pulled off, Malachi followed.

When we arrived at the car lot on Newtown Road. Dre was looking at a dark blue four door Jetta.

"How much is it?" Malachi asked him opening the door and inspecting it inside and out.

"Six thousand."

"So cop it. You got that. Get it if you want it."

"I don't quite have the whole six. I moved into a new apartment with my girl and bought her and the baby some new clothes. That was my Christmas gift to them. Plus I gave my mom a few gees."

"How much do you have?"

"Three thousand for myself and eight thousand for ya'll from the weight sales I made last night."

"Damn, eight thousand all ready? What do you owe us from the half?"

"Six thousand now. You said fourteen, right Chi?"

"Right. So you're three thousand short for the Jetta?" Malachi asked as another couple inspected the same car.

Watching Dre look disappointed, Chi tapped the dealer who was sitting in the passenger seat explaining all the features to the white couple. "He'll take it," Chi said dropping six thousand cash on the dealer's lap.

"Don't worry about that Dre, that's on us. Keep your three thousand."

"Please get out of my car," was all Dre could think to say.

Laughing at this outburst, we told Dre that we'd hook up with him later to check out his new place plus bring him the other thirty gees worth of work.

Back in the house that night we all sat down and talked concluding that once these three bricks were finished and we gave Happy his eighteen thousand, we should have at least sixty-five thousand to re-up with.

"Malachi, listen. You have to stop hanging out in the spots so much now. You're making you're car hot and you're becoming a familiar face to the jump out squad, especially Broffman - that super cop that harassed you the night that Fred got busted. Your hanging out will only eventually make us all hot and we're not getting enough money to get hot for nothing so fast."

"I know Sedique, but you act like I'm in the spot twenty-four seven. I have a few hoodrats that I trick with, that's it. I got you though. I know what you're saying."

"Yo, we should bring our own team down here to run all of the spots and we just sell weight after our next Re. That's better than us being seen in the spots then back on the campus going to classes. Then driving two cars back to Kempsville, and Sedique, you didn't even get your joint yet; that will make three," Jeff said in a precautionary tone of voice.

"Yeah, you're right Jeff. It's settled. After the next Re, we'll bring our own team down to help Dre. They can stay at the safe house and drive your Honda. Until then, let's knock this work off and stay as low as possible. The cars all ready have people at school talking and that's enough right there."

Just as I was about to continue, the door bell rang.

Jeff looked at his watch. "I got it. It's Trina," he said, confirming it by seeing his Honda parked outside.

Trina entered and immediately disappeared with Jeff upstairs to his room.

Malachi called Terry and chatted for a few minutes before hanging up. "Dique, I'll be right back. I'm going back up to the campus to pick Terry up."

I laughed. Laying back on the couch as lonely as ever, watching T.V. with my hand in my pants thinking about Melanie and that nasty walk.

Later that night Dre' called my cell phone saying that he'd have nine thousand for us by tomorrow morning. He must've been driving at the time because in the background I heard "Redman" pumping from the speakers as he hit his horn and yelled "You drive slow as a bitch!" to someone.

I laughed. "Okay Dre, hit me tomorrow. If I don't call you back it's because I'm in class. Just hit Chi or Jeff."

I hung up from Dre, stretched out on the couch and continued to watch T.V. remembering that I had to pick Bianca up at eleven but thinking about Melanie and how I had to get to know the story behind that walk.

Malachi, this is nice. When did you move in?" "Not too long ago. We moved in over the break?"

"And who decorated your room? Don't tell me you had another girl in here before me."

"No Terry, I did all of this myself. It's not too much. You can help me finish it if you want to."

"What's bothering you Chi? You seem a little aggravated and tense,"Terry said before ordering me to lay back on the bed.

"I'm okay, we all just had a little talk and Dique thinks I drive my car around town too much."

"Well how else are you supposed to get around?" she asked while kneeling on the floor in front of me.

"I know T. It's a little more to it than that though. I'm all right."

"Chi, I missed you when you were gone. I thought about you over the entire break. You heard my girl Bianca broke up with her man, right? Or did Sedique tell you yet?" She asked while resting her head in my lap.

"He didn't tell me they broke up but he did tell me that her man was beefing about us being up in his car the night we all went out a while ago."

"Yeah, he's a real jerk. He doesn't even let that girl study in peace without calling and questioning something. I'm glad she's finished with him."

"Finished with him huh? Is that how ya operate? Finished with one and on to the next one?" I asked, staring up at my ceiling, not really expecting an answer.

"No Malachi, That's not how we operate. She was in a bad relationship and I'm just glad she's finished with it," Terry said while unzipping my jeans.

"What are you doing T?"

"Oh, you must be aggravated if you don't know what I'm doing. Just relax Chi. Let me show you how I operate," Terry demanded while reaching into my zipper and pulling me out. "Damn I missed you she said as if praying over my erection before licking all around the tip of me.

I sighed and got comfortable, closing my eyes. Terry went to work feasting away on me until I was seconds from swelling and erupting into her mouth.

"Come on Chi, let me get it," she requested while now jerking me and sucking on my balls. "Come on baby, it's okay," she continued before deep throating me and slightly tugging on my balls until I began to pant and release.

"Mmmmmm," she moaned, swallowing and teary eyed. "God I love this dick, come for me Chi," she relentlessly demanded while tugging on me. "Are you finished," she asked looking up at me with a face full of dick.

I nodded.

"Okay, good boy. Now that's how I operate."

"Oh really," I managed to say while trying to regain my strength.

"Yes really, and that's only because I like you so much Mr. Malachi. I hope you're not still stressed over the conversation you had with Sedique earlier. You know that's your boy. He only tells you things that are good for you."

I looked down at Terry who was now undressing.

"Girl, come get in this bed and go to sleep."

The next few weeks in the New Year seemed unbelievable. Bianca had basically moved in and so did Jeff's girl, Trina. Terry's parents checked on her almost everyday so she played the good girl on campus and just visited Malachi in his

room on the weekends. The talk on the campus was that Bianca's ex wanted to see me because he was still upset about her picking us up in his Mustang and still obsessed with her, even though she dumped him months ago.

All of that cleared up one night after a basketball game on campus when Dre and two of his stickmen all acted like kids begging for change as they approached his Mustang on both sides, posted two Glock nineteens up against the heads of him and his passenger and said in a fake D.C. accent, "we watchin' you Joe. Don't play yourself and be no bamma."

He didn't know who they were or where they came from. All he knew was that two D.C. young guns had him picked out. A week later, "Bianca was a nice girl and he hoped I treated her well," was all that was heard from him.

We continued to attend classes during the day as well as move work at night. In less than five weeks, we were down to our last eight ounces. Packaging that up into our infamous gee packs, we distributed that amongst the spots and ten days later we were counting seventy-seven thousand dollars, minus the eighteen thousand we owed Happy, that left us fifty-nine thousand dollars to Re up with and we were spending every dime of it in our attempt to blow.

I beeped Happy from my cell phone and put in 122-59-3. When he returned my beep, I looked at my pager and saw 6500-3. I showed the return beep to Jeff and then to Malachi and we all looked at each other knowing that from that moment on we were not

your average college students.

We had six and a half bricks waiting for us and if our math was correct and Hap was still giving them to us for sixteen, then we'd only owe him forty-one thousand. We could make that off of one and a half and still have five bricks for fifty-nine thousand. If we wanted, we could sell all of those in weight and still more than double the money we spent.

The trip was set for Thursday night. We'd leave at two a.m., reach New York by eight a.m., see Happy by ten a.m., and be back in Virginia by five p.m. Friday. The only thing different about this trip was that Jeff's chick Trina was following us in his Honda because he was leaving his car in New York to get his interior done at the auto clinic over on Jerome Avenue in the Bronx. At least that's what she thought.

On Thursday night the trip went as planned. No one would've ever expected that Jeff's 87 Honda Accord with a college decal on it being driven by a pretty female with frames on had six and half kilos stashed in the trunk. The entire ride down, Malachi and I followed not too far behind them in his car watching Jeff as he slept, having Trina drive the whole six hours.

I beeped Hap and put in my code followed by 10-4 once we crossed the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

The next morning, Malachi was with Dre giving him the procedure for the order of operation. Within a week, Malachi and I made a quick trip back to New York to give Hap the forty thousand that we owed him plus show off our D.C. chicks in the city for one day. When Bianca and Terry spotted the Apollo Theater

and realized that they were on 125th Street, they both blacked out wanting to stop and buy everything they laid their eyes on. Pulling up in front of the building, Happy and Ruben were sitting on two brand new, milk-white Accura Legend coupes. That instantly decided it for me. That's what I wanted, a milk-white coupe with white interior and white three-piece BB's rims on it. Approaching Hap and stuffing a brown paper bag under his arm at the same time, I asked Hap when he had copped the joints.

"Yesterday," he replied. "I saw the commercial back in November and ordered two for me and Rube."

I introduced Hap to Terry and Bianca who were standing there with us, both in some multi-colored tight stretch pants, K-Swiss sneakers, and a look that said, "we're from D.C." before anyone even asked. "Bianca, Terry, these are my friends Happy and Ruben."

"Hi Happy. Hi Ruben," they replied at the same time.

"Listen, I only came up here to hit you with that Hap," I said referring to the paper bag tucked under his arm containing forty thousand. "We're going to take them shopping and then we're right back out. I'll beep you later."

Just as we were about to get back into Malachi's car, Ni'chelle came walking up and hugged me first and then Malachi.

"What's up Ni'chelle. How are you?" I asked nervously.

"I'm fine Sedique," Ni'chelle answered as she looked at Malachi. "Why don't you take Gomez to

Virginia with you. He's fucking up Chi and he's stressing my mother out with all of his bullshit."

Gomez was Malachi's cousin, Ni'chelle's younger brother who took over Chi's bedroom when he left for college. "Where is he?" Malachi asked looking at Ni'chelle while I stood there nervous as hell, hoping she didn't say anything about our night.

"I don't know. Somewhere acting stupid," she answered looking over at Bianca and Terry. "You're not going to introduce me to your friends? Hi ladies, my name is Ni'chelle. I'm Malachi's cousin."

"I'm Terry"

"And I'm Bianca," they replied, introducing themselves.

"Ni'chelle looked Bianca up and down and turned her attention back to Malachi.

"Okay, we gotta' run," I interrupted before anyone said another word.

"Ni'chelle, tell Gomez to stay by the phone. I'll call him when I get back down to Virginia. If he wants to come down, I'll send him a bus ticket," Malachi said while opening the car door for Terry.

"Okay," she answered, winking at me while licking her lips as she watched Bianca's ass climbing into the back seat.

We pulled off and my heart returned to its normal beating rate. I fell asleep in the back seat on Bianca's lap while she rubbed my head. When I woke up, we were safely pulling into our complex back in Virginia.

1990
"Notorious"

Over the course of the next few months of the spring semester, we had finished the five bricks that we had and we were now doing ten at a time from Happy.

Bianca and Terry were now the talk of the campus because Terry was always seen driving Malachi's car, and Bianca was always on the passenger side.

Gomez, Malachi's younger cousin came down and moved into the safe house. His job was to run with Dre and manage all of the spots until we decided to give him his own. Within a month's time he started beefing with one of the neighborhood guys in the spot and got shot in the leg. When he and Dre went back and shot up the whole block, I knew it was time to either send him back to New York or move into my own townhouse, or maybe both.

We were getting a lot of money now. Individually and the three of us together under one roof was a stick-up kid's answered prayer.

The semester came to an end and I still had not purchased a car yet. I had the money to get whatever I wanted, but I sat on it intending to make a grand impression at the right moment. During the summer, Happy and Ruben came down to Virginia in both of their joints so I just rode around with them or drove their cars.

Jeff was the first to move out. Him and Trina found a nice townhouse in Hampton, closer to their school. He'd started selling his work all in weight on that side and maintained a real conservative life style.

The fourth of July weekend rolled around and we were all back on the Virginia Beach strip, this time in two of the hottest Accruas on four wheels. Hap and Rube parlayed up in the Holiday Inn with two chicks they'd met at this club called the "Big Apple" the night before.

Bianca came down from D.C. for the fourth of July weekend and when she beeped me and put a Virginia number in followed by her code, I was instantly pissed for two reasons. One, because that meant that my girl was around on the weekend that ass was everywhere, and two, because she should not have been calling me from any Virginia phone except for mine. "Where the hell is she?" I asked myself while dialing the number she'd put in my pager.

"Thank. you for calling the Clarion Ocean Front," a receptionist answered. "How may I direct your call?"

Just as she asked the question, my beeper went off again "1-707."

"Can you ring room 707 please," I asked.

"Hello."

"Hi. Boo."

"Hi Boo hell! What are doing on the beach and who are you with?"

"Calm down Sedique. I'm with my mother. I wanted to bring her to the house but I didn't know who was there."

My anger subsided and a smile became me. "How long are you staying?"

"We're leaving tomorrow, she has to go back to work but we wanted to get away for a day."

I was in the clear. One night wouldn't damage my fun. "I'll be there in an hour."

That afternoon I met Bianca's mother plus gave her fifteen hundred dollars so that she could shop and show her mother a nice time before they headed back to D.C.. Before leaving, I kissed her, "I have a surprise for you when you come back next semester."

She whispered in my ear, "Sedique, I have a surprise for you too, I think I'm pregnant. My period is late."

Although I'd grown to really care for Bianca, her surprise was a little more than I was expecting. She'd suggested that we start using protection for this very reason. However, after the first one was always used, she took honors in pulling it off and holding it up so she could measure "how much I loved her." After she got her initial reading, she'd grab me and slide me right back in. Then it was always "Sedique, I just want to feel you inside of me."

"Pregnant? Are you sure Bianca?"

"No, I'm not sure. I'll take a home pregnancy test when I go back home and you'll be the first to know,

all right?"

"Oh God, please don't let her be pregnant," I prayed to myself while kissing her forehead. "Make sure you call me Bianca."

After talking to Bianca and meeting her mother, I went back over to Hap's room to discuss my new-found position with him.

"Sedique, remember what I told you? Get in and get out. Your set up is running real smooth. You should start doing something with your money now. And get your own house. You don't need to be cooped up with Malachi. He's your man, I know, but you don't want to go down because of him," Hap stated.

"What do you mean Hap?"

"Listen Dique, I've been down here for a couple of days now. Malachi rides all over town and through the spots in his car and then comes and parks it right in front of your house."

"Hap, we just had a talk about that shit too. I just mentioned that to him. The nigga' is hardheaded."

"Yeah, well don't let his hard head be the cause of your soft behind."

"Enough said. I'm moving out. He's talking about bringing Satin down here anyway. Those two can keep the townhouse; I'm going to find me something real low."

"And listen," Hap continued, "When you come back up to New York, bring me ten thousand on top of whatever you're spending. I have a car for you to take the work back down in. You can keep it and put Virginia plates on it, but don't ride it all over town. I had a stash put behind the dashboard and it can hold

at least fifteen bricks."

"Okay, no problem. Good lookin' out Hap."

"Don't thank me. Thank Ruben. He's the one that said you needed it."

"Thanks Rube," I said, looking over at Ruben.

"It's nothing Kid. You're fam."

"Yo, there is one question I have to ask you," Hap stated, "and tell me the truth."

"Yeah, what's up?"

Happy looked at me while huggin Rube and asked me in a low smiling tone of voice, "Are you fucking Malachi's cousin Ni'chelle?"

I smiled and laughed, "That's it? That's the question?"

"Yeah," they both grinned, "Now answer it."

"Yeah, . . Yeah, I hit her, . . . and slayed her too I might add, but how do you two know? That's supposed to be our little secret."

"Sedique, when the block found out that we were going down to Virginia to check you, Ni'chelle literally begged us to tell you that she said 'hi' and remind you that you know where she is. She didn't even ask about or send a message for her own brother or cousin and we heard Gomez got shot in the leg not too long ago," Hap continued. "I told you she could smell money a mile away," He said while laughing.

They both walked up to me and sniffed me out, then grabbed me around my head in a headlock. "Yeah kid, you're not playing. Every nigga uptown wants to fuck Ni'chelle and you sneak in the back door way from V.A.. You must've did your thing because she definitely sent you a strong shout out!"

We continued to chat and Hap reminded me for the third time to make my money work for me. "Didn't you go to school back in the day with that Puff Daddy cat?"

"Yeah, why? He's a dancer. Dancer's don't get no money."

"You know he's out in D.C. going to Howard now and doing parties. Some shit called 'Gold Parties.' Them "Buttnaked" cats are holding him down."

"Yeah? One of them went to Mount also," I replied.

"He has this celebrity basketball game coming up at City College real soon

"Hap," I interrupted, "I'm getting fifteen bricks at a time from you. All of these celebrities together can't count that much paper."

"Sedique, since you're down here going to school, all I'm saying is take advantage of it."

"Okay, I got you Hap. Just give me a minute."

"Sedique, we're leaving tomorrow morning," Rube interjected. "I have a little meeting to go to tonight and after that, we're out."

"Rube, what kind of meeting do you have way down here? You don't even know anyone in this state."

"Well, let's just put in this way Dique. I have a way of meeting people in prominent places," Rube said with a laugh.

The next morning Hap called me and told me that they were on their way out.

Malachi was out front washing his car when I went outside. "Chi."

"Yeah Dique, what's up?"

"When you finish washing your joint, let's take a

ride somewhere."

"Where?" He asked while spraying the suds off of the sparkling chrome rims of his 535 BMW. He traded his Milano in right before the summer hit and copped a mint condition used BMW.

"I'm moving and I want to go and look at these three townhouses that I saw in the paper."

"You're moving?" he asked surprised.

"Yeah, ... moving."

"Is everything all right?" Malachi asked while looking at me.

"Yeah, everything's cool Chi. It's just that for one, Bianca might be pregnant, and two, we're moving a lot of work now and we need to move more discretely."

I didn't even bother to tell him that he keeps flying all over town in his hot ass car and then parking it right in front of the house because we'd discussed that several times all ready.

"Pregnant? When did you find this out?"

"She told me when she came down with her mother over the weekend, but she's not sure yet. She'll be calling anytime now to let me know. Plus, you and Terry are lovebirds now. You could use the space."

Malachi continued to hose his car down. "Give me twenty minutes. I need to dry it off and change my sweats. "Oh, and guess what Dique."

"What?"

"Terry's pregnant."

"What! Are you sure Chi?"

"I'm positive. She took two home pregnancy tests with me on the phone."

"So, what are you going to do Chi?"

"What do you mean what I am going to do? You're moving out and she's moving in. It works out perfect."

"Well, when were you planning on telling me this?" I asked.

"Today. I just did. I had to be sure first."

I walked back inside and saw my pager vibrating on the kitchen counter. "Bianca," I said to myself, dialing her 202 number back immediately'.

"Hello," I said as soon as a voice answered.

"Damn Sedique. You never call me back this fast."

"I know. I missed you," I replied, hoping to draw the news from the pregnancy test as fast as possible.

"Well, my friend came as soon as I got back home."

"Your friend, who?" I asked, not knowing what she was telling me.

"My period boy. Who do you think?"

"Yes!" I thought to myself while acting stupid by saying, "so that means your not pregnant?"

"No Boo. You're in the clear," she answered in that slurred D.C. accent that I now loved that much more.

"What surprise do you have for me?"

"Bianca," I said, "When you come back next month. If I tell you now it wouldn't be a surprise."

"Okay. Just give me a hint, pleeaase Boo."

"Nope. I gotta' run. Malachi is blowing for me outside. I'll call you later. Be good."

In the three hours that Malachi and I spent looking at the three townhouses that I had located in the "For Rent" section of the newspaper, the house located on Lymbrook Lane was the one for me. A two master bedroom, two story townhouse with a backyard and garage. After doing a thorough walk through and

talking with the owner, I gave him a security deposit to hold it for me and planned to move in three weeks, on August fifteenth. I assured him that he had absolutely nothing to worry about regarding the rent payments as "my parents will pay the rent for six months at a time," I lied, knowing that I could pay it for a year or two if I wanted to.

After signing the leasing agreement and leaving my new townhouse, Malachi and I hit Independence Boulevard. He wanted to stop by Circuit City to purchase a camcorder that he wanted after seeing it in the newspaper.

"Yo Chi, go ahead. I'm walking over to this car lot just to look around. I'll meet you back at the car."

The Acura dealer was located directly beside Circuit City and when I walked into the showroom, a pine green Acura Legend coupe with butter soft tan leather interior was sitting right in the middle of the showroom floor with both doors open seeming to say to me, "take me Sedique, take me home with you."

"You like that?" a black salesman asked appearing out of no where. "That's our special edition. That color is rare for these cars and it comes with Perrelies on it. Go ahead, sit inside, feel the leather."

I looked at the sticker on the window.

"That's just the sticker price. If your credit is good, I'm sure we could trim a little here and little there and get you in it. You want to do some paperwork on it?"

"Naah, that's all right," I replied, stepping out of it and walking over to the wall, looking at all of the different rims being advertised.

"Yeah, those would look good on this coupe," refer-

ring to the BB's with the chrome trim. He continued, "We can have the grill of the rims painted to match the exact unique color of the car."

Hap and Rube had white ones. I'll kill'em in this pine green one I thought to myself. "Maybe I'll do some paperwork some other day."

"Okay, but I'm sure I can get you financed," he continued to say while handing me his business card for the car lot. "If you want, we can do a quick write up and you can take it to your own bank."

"No thank you. Maybe later," I replied before exiting the show room and returning to meet Malachi back at his car. As I walked across the Acura lot and towards Chi, he was video taping me walking towards him.

"Yeah Dique, from now on, we record all of the Greek Fests and Picnics in Philly that we go to. Annnd he continued, "They have a Freak nic in Atlanta that we gotta' hit next year Dique."

I listened to Malachi as he maneuvered his 535 through traffic heading back to the house, but all I could think of was me in that special edition coupe with custom painted BB's matching it. When we pulled up in front of our townhouse, Jeff and Trina pulled right behind us.

"Jeff, what's up? What are you two doing on this side?"

"I'm about to head up top and I thought I would drop by to check on you and Chi before I left."

"Everything's cool on this side. I just went to put a security deposit down on a new crib."

"You're moving?"

"Yeah, August fifteenth I move in. I'll probably buy

some furniture next week so it can be delivered on the day I move in."

"Is everything okay with you and Chi?"

"Yeah, everything's good. I'm just getting my spot and him and Terry are going to keep this one."

"What about Gomez? is he still wild'n?"

"Yeah, and that's another reason I'm moving, I don't know who's worse, him or Malachi for driving this show mobile all over the place."

"Okay, I'll be back this weekend," Jeff said as he threw me a plastic bag before pulling off in his burgundy Infinity Q45. "That's the twenty five from the work Dre had. I'll hit you on the hip when we get back."

"Jeff!" I yelled before he pulled off. "Hold on a minute." I reached in the bag and pulled out two five "G" stacks. "Give this 10 G's to Hap or Ruben for me and tell them we'll see them soon, but this is for the car."

"What car?"

"I'll tell you later, call me when you reach New York," I said as I walked towards the house.

He hit his horn twice and pulled off. When I walked in, Malachi was on the couch scratching his balls, obviously talking to Terry on his phone because I heard him say, "I can't wait to see you so I can video tape us in action with this camcorder that I just bought."

I walked upstairs to my room and dropped backwards on my bed, throwing the bag I just got from Jeff in my closet. Staring up at the ceiling all I could think of was moving and what the hell was I going to surprise Bianca with when she came back.

August fifteenth came and the movers were moving the furniture into my new townhouse. For the time being, I took Jeff's Honda to get around in when I wasn't riding with one of them in their joints. My final decision for Bianca's surprise was a nice tennis bracelet that I'd seen in Reed's Jewelers at Military Circle Mall. Malachi advised me not to purchase it and to wait until we hit New York again to spend money on jewelry.

"If you're going to buy diamonds Sedique, then you might as well buy them in the diamond district and get the most for your money," he said.

I agreed and decided to wait, concluding that if I'm going to the diamond district I might as well pick up a nice set.

As the movers were moving the last of my new furniture into my townhouse, I noticed a middle aged blackman across the street throwing a football with his son. He eyed me and didn't appear to be too welcoming so I gave him the same bland look in return. When the movers were finished and the furniture trucks left, I looked at the blackman again, went inside, closed my door and enjoyed my new found privacy amongst box after box of my belongings in my very own place that I could feel free to walk around butt naked if I chose to.

Orientation for school started and I took Jeff's Honda up to the campus to see if I could pick up a nice freshman before Bianca and

the rest of her girlfriends returned for school. When I pulled on to the campus, I spotted Melanie carrying a box up into the girl's dorm with another girl. This day she wore a powder blue tennis skirt that hung high above the knees attached to her voluptuously thick bowed legs. I was hoping the wind or something would blow so I could get a glimpse of her goods.

"Excuse me. Do you need help?" I asked, pulling up beside her and profiling in a 1987 Honda.

"No thanks. I can handle it," she answered, granting my foremost wish by bending over and exposing her ass in some white panties.

"Melanie, do you remember me? I was talking to you by the Student Union Building last semester. You wouldn't give my your number," I added while smiling.

"Yes Sedique, I remember you, " she replied, standing there holding a box.

"Why don't you let me take you out. Give me your number so I can call you or something?"

"Nope. Gotta' man," is all she said as she walked away.

"Shit!" I said to myself while staring at Melanie's ass as she walked into the dormitory. It wasn't as nice as Bianca's but the way she walked and carried it with such confidence amplified my craving to get in it.

Frustrated, I drove off of the campus and headed back to my house to count the money I had there. Happy beeped me and put 122-411 in my beeper. After returning to my house and counting up what was there, I beeped Hap back and put in 122-175-2.

With the money that Malachi had on the streets, we actually had close to two-hundred thousand to re-

up with but I was going to the diamond district and if I didn't have to, I wasn't about to touch my personal savings.

Our usual Re was now ten kilos and most of the time Hap threw us an extra five. Everyone sold weight now, even Dre. But to keep the street money flowing, all of the spots were fully operative with the biggest rocks in the city. Our objective was to corner the market and give every hustler prices they couldn't refuse.

After Malachi and I got together, we went to the safe house to pick up Gomez and his girlfriend and headed up top. Malachi told him that we had bought him a car. I made sure to remind him not to tell that little nut that the car had a hydraulic stash with fifteen kilos in it.

Arriving in New York, I took Hap the money and then headed straight for the diamond district.

"Sedique, the car is all ready so you can move when you want to," Hap said.

Malachi stayed with Gomez and his girlfriend so he wouldn't do anything crazy or try to show off. When I came back uptown, I told Chi to head back down to Virginia without me. "Make sure Gomez' girlfriend drives safely," I said while throwing Chi two sets of keys. "I'm catching a flight down tomorrow morning after I pick up the jewelry I ordered from Jacob. The car is the blue Mazda in the garage up on 144th Street and St. Nicholas Avenue. It's all ready full so all she has to do is get in and drive. Pick me up from the airport tomorrow evening at one. My flight leaves at twelve ten."

After seeing Malachi, Gomez and the work off,

there was one more spot I had to hit before tomorrow morning - Ni'chelle's house.

Flagging a cab, "102nd Street and 2nd Avenue" were the instructions given as I sat comfortably in the back seat of a fiber glassed Buick that now resembled a squad car from the inside. When we arrived at my destination, I stuffed ten dollars into a rotating slot and told him to keep the change. He immediately unlocked the doors and I stepped out just as swift. As soon as I rang Ni'chelle's buzzer and said "Sedi," she buzzed me into her building.

"Who are you with? Where's Chi?" she asked as I entered the threshold of her apartment's black and white mystique. "They just left. I'm flying back down tomorrow morning," I told her while removing my jacket and making myself comfortable on her couch. "I had something very important to take care of so I needed to stay overnight. My flight leaves at twelve tomorrow though," I added as Ni'chelle came over and sat next to me.

"So Sedique, is that D.C. girl named Bianca your girlfriend?"

"I don't know about girlfriend," I lied, "But yeah, I'm messing with her."

"She's cute," Ni'chelle remarked as she got up and walked to her kitchen in her slippers and a short cut t-shirt.

Returning to her now warm position beside me on the couch she whispered in my ear, "Well Sedique, if you're messing with her, what are you doing here?" and then licked me in my ear.

"What is this?" she continued, obviously observing

the growth in my jeans as she grabbed me and began to rub.

"Stop playing Ni'chelle," I laughed as she picked up a hand held mirror and looked at herself in it.

"What are you doing?

"I got my tongue pierced this week. I'm just checking it," she answered as she stuck her tongue out while looking in the mirror.

"Oh, let me see it."

"On one condition," Ni'chelle demanded, putting ice cubes into her mouth.

"What?"

"Unzip your pants," she requested while slurping on at least two ice cubes.

Before she could finish, I was full extended in my hand. As soon as Ni'chelle saw it she opened her mouth, "SEE," and devoured me.

"Oooohhhh," I moaned from the coldness that was sliding up and down my shaft. "Damn girl."

Once the ice melted and I started screwing Ni'chelle in her now warm mouth, she stopped and demanded that I look directly at her.

"If you close your eyes, I stop Sedique."

I kept moving in and out of her mouth as I strained to keep my eyes open to look at her. With her free hand she reached under and started fingering herself while deep throating me. "Look at me," she demanded in between the wettest slurps.

"Suck it Ni'chelle," was all I could manage to say as she ran her tongue ring around my head.

"Look at me Sedique. Look into my eyes. Are you ready to come for me?" she asked while staring right

at me.

I nodded my head and moaned, "yeah."

She picked up her hand held mirror with her wet sticky hand and held it in front of her face and went into overdrive. She watched herself as she kissed and sucked up and down my dick and then made it disappear into her throat.

"Ohhh shhiitt, Ni'chelle, I'm .... I'm ..., I ..."

She interrupted me. "Look at me Sedique she looked up dead into my eyes and said, "Call me Bianca," as she lunged relentlessly into me devouring me. The shock of what she had just said coupled with her constant sucking made me release instantly. Ni'chelle caught every contraction release in her mouth and swallowed as she winked at me and sucked tighter, squeezing all of me out.

"There. Good night. I'm going to bed now. Tell Bianca I said 'hi' and 'thank you' when you get back to VA tomorrow."

"Hold, ... hold, ... what about ... ?" Before I could even finish my sentence she interrupted.

"Not tonight Sedique. I'm on my period. If you leave before I wake up, lock the door and call me to let me know you had a safe flight."

Malachi was waiting at the airport for me when I exited my flight at Norfolk International Airport.

"Damn Dique, you don't have a car but you have enough diamonds on to freeze hell over."

I laughed, "Yeah, I treated myself to a little something while I was in the district." I only intended to spend five thousand, but I got a little carried away and dropped fifteen on Bianca's bracelet. My two

caret studs, pinky ring and a double layered bicycle link diamond bracelet."

When school started and Bianca came back and saw me parked in front of her dormitory in a brand new pine green Acura coupe with pine green BB's on it, she walked up to me and kissed me.

"Is this my surprise Sedique?"

"No, not quite B." I reached into my pocket and removed her gift wrapped box. "Surprise. Here open this."

She proceeded to rip the paper and open the box. "Oh Sedique, thank you," she said as I removed the bracelet from her hand and placed it on her wrist.

"You like it?"

Just as I asked that question, Melanie walked by and said in a real inviting voice, "Hi Sedique."

I didn't even speak. I threw Bianca the keys, "Let's go, you drive."

"Sedique, where are your license plates?"

I pointed to the little piece of paper in the back window. "I just bought it, come on, let's go."

Bianca smiled as she entered the driver's side and sat comfortably behind the wheel. I reclined in the soft leather interior of my new passenger seat and gave her directions to the townhouse.

As we pulled off of the campus, I peeked into the passenger side mirror and saw Melanie standing there staring at my exhaust pipes.

"Sedique, you know I love you, right? You're my Diamond." I laughed to myself. I liked the sound of that, "Diamond." "I love you too B and you're right. I am your Diamond."

"Girls Best Friend"

Oooohhhh shit. Stop. Fuck, Diamond, "Melanie moaned as I pent her in a dead lock position in her room that night. "Ooohhh God, Diamond, this is some good dick," she sighed as I bore into her, punishing her for fronting on me earlier.

Melanie had just moved into a boarding house with two of her classmates, Nikky and Danielle. The three of them majored in nursing and decided they could afford to rent a second floor apartment across from the Hospital where they studied.

Earlier that day I'd given Melanie a ride to WalMart to purchase some things for her room as well as some paint. By the time she covered everything in the room in plastic and we finished painting it, the both of us were covered in paint and it was one in the morning.

"I can't believe we just went there," Melanie said as I hung over her with my limpness still inside. "Diamond, I have a boyfriend and the whole campus knows that as well as everyone knows that Bianca is

your girl. Diamond, ... Diamond!" she yelled obviously realizing that I was beginning to snore. "Boy, wake up," she demanded while contracting her muscles and pushing me out of her. "No one finds out about this, okay?"

"Yeah, whatever Melanie. No problem," I replied in a tired voice.

"Listen, I like you and all, but I shouldn't have gone there with you. I wasn't even supposed to have sex until next week. I just had an abortion two weeks ago."

"An abortion?" I asked now wide awake.

"Yes. I was pregnant by my boyfriend Slugs, but I'm not having any babies until at least after I graduate. Plus I told him I was tired of his shit and not to call me anymore when he asked me was it his."

Judging from the way she held my ass while she fucked me and made herself come at least twice, I could understand his concern. If you didn't have a secret camera or a bugging device on a brown skinned, bowlegged, voluptuous girl that good in bed, then insecurities definitely had the possibility of sneaking you off guard. Hearing this news and realizing that my car was parked right outside, I began to feel a bit nervous. I walked into her closet to look out of the window and check on my car.

"You don't have to leave," she said, following me into her closet totally naked.

"I'm not, I'm just checking my joint," I replied while looking out of her window.

"Boy, nobody's going to do anything to your car. You're not in New York, you're in Virginia," she said while leaning out of the window looking up at the midnight stars in the sky.

"I know, I'm just making sure none of your nut case friends try to sabotage my car," I replied, leaning to hold on to her shoulders while admiring her ass raised on her tiptoes.

She felt me begin to rise up against her and she turned around. "Look at that one Diamond," she said while opening her legs, pretending to be so into the astrology.

I leaned forward, "Which one," pressing my full erection between her.

Melanie lowered her left hand behind herself, grabbing me and arched up before she slid me up into her, "boyyy... you naaassty."

You're what?!"

"Yes girl, you heard me right, I'm pregnant."

"Terry, who else knows, did you tell Malachi yet?"

"Bianca, of course he knows. You're the only one that's late finding out."

"What? You bitch. I'm supposed to be your girl and I'm the last to know? Some friend you are."

"No, it's not like that. I was waiting until you came back to school and Sedique gave you your surprise and then I was going to surprise you with this. You're going to be the godmother."

"Oh my God Terry. What about school? What about your family?"

" I'm going to take a year off after the baby and as far as my family, they know. I've moved in what Malachi. I love him Bianca."

"Oh, I'm going to cry. When are you due? How many months are you?"

"I'm not exactly sure yet, but I know I'm at least three months. I go for my first check up next week. Will you come with me?"

"Me? What about Malachi? Is he going?"

"Yes, but I want you to come also. I mean, you are the one that hooked us up last year."

"Yeah, I know, and I guess he's been wearing your ass out too, huh?"

"Stop being funny Bianca, will you come?"

"Of course girl. I'll be right at your side. We have to think of some names."

"Hold on, if it's a boy, Chi wants to name him Malachi, Jr."

"Okay, What if it's a girl though?"

"I don't know Bianca. We'll think of something pretty. Speaking of girl. How are you and Sedique?"

"I don't know Terry. Why? Why'd you ask?"

"Bianca, I know you've heard about that girl Melanie being seen in his car, or his car being parked at her house."

"Yeah, I know. I haven't said much to him though. If he comes around, he comes. If he doesn't, I'm all right girl."

"No. What you need to do is step to that bitch Melanie."

"For what? To say 'hey bitch. Stop raping my man.' Not. He's fucking her just like she's fucking him."

"Gosh, I hate this shit Bianca. You two look so good together."

"So do you and Chi, Terry, but ..., I'm not going to

stress it. Regg put me through enough shit to last a lifetime, plus, if I called Sedique right now and wanted to fuck him tonight, he'd be right here. He's just got a little money now so a lot of bitches is checking for him. What can I do?"

"Girl, you're a lot better than me because I would fuck him and that bitch up. You know they call him Diamond now, don't you?"

"Yes, I know Terry. I gave him that name when he gave me this bracelet. We have better things to discuss though. We have a baby on the way. What do you want?"

"I want a girl, but Malachi wants a boy. He's redoing one of the rooms in the house for the baby but we don't know what colors to go with yet - blue or pink. I guess after the sonogram, we'll know. I'm so nervous girl."

"Don't worry. We're all on the same team. We're in this together. You, me, Malachi, and I guess Sedique or Diamond or whoever he is today. Does Jeff and his girlfriend Trina know yet?"

"Yes, they know. Jeff is excited for Chi. He's a nice guy too. I like Jeff, Bianca."

On the way home from Melanie's house the next morning, Jeff's girlfriend Trina beeped me. "Sedique, Jeff is in jail!" she yelled frantically as soon as I called her back.

"Jail!?"

"Yes, jail. He left here telling me that he was going to the mall and the next thing I know, he's calling collect

from jail."

"Shit. What jail is he in Trina? Do you know?"

"Norfolk. He's in the Norfolk City Jail. His bail is sixty thousand dollars."

"Sixty thousand!" I replied, unconsciously yelling at Trina."

"Yes, sixty."

"What the fuck did he do?"

"I don't know Sedique. He called me and I called you. That's all I know right now."

"Okay, okay. Don't worry about it. I'll call a bondsman as soon as I hang up with you. Where's his car?"

"Sedique, I don't know. I guess it's wherever he left it. I have mine though."

"Okay. Meet me down at the jail. I'll be in the parking lot across the street sitting in my car."

"Okay, I'll be right there," Trina said and hung up the phone.

I called a bail bondsman and told him that my friend was in jail and his bail was sixty thousand.

"What's his charge," the bondsman asked.

"I don't know. His girlfriend just called me and told me that he got arrested at the mall today."

"Okay. What's his name?" the bondsman asked.

"Jeff. Jeffery Ryals."

"All right. Give me a call back in ten minutes. Let me see if I can get some information on your friend," he said before we both hung up the phone.

Exactly ten minutes later I called back. "Who's going to bail your friend out?" the bondsman inquired.

"His fiancé."

"And what's your name," he continued.

"My name is Michael," I lied.

"Michael what?"

"Michael Jackson," I answered while holding in my laugh and not giving this nosy bastard my real name.

"Well Mr. Jackson, it seems that your buddy Jeffery got his self into a tight situation."

"What's his charge?"

"He's got a PWID."

"A what?"

"A possession with intent to distribute. It appears that he was going to take some cocaine to someone and the narcs intercepted the deal."

"Shit," I whispered to myself.

"Now, do you want the good news or the bad news first?"

"Give me the good news first."

"The good news is that I can go get him."

"Okay, then what's the bad news?"

"The bad news is that since Jeffery is here from New York, I'm going to need two signatures or ... he continued, "ten thousand dollars instead of the ten percent usual charge of six thousand."

Trina arrived in the parking lot and I gave her six thousand dollars in cash and four thousand in American Express Travelers Checks, telling her to sign them over to the bondsman. No way was anyone going to just walk ten thousand cash up to a white man who made a living working at a jail everyday.

After about an hour waiting in the parking lot, Jeff was released.

Later that night at his house in Hampton he explained the whole situation to me and Malachi over

dinner. He was hitting some guy named Stinka and Stinka was being watched. He took a half of brick of powder to the mall in his "Q" to hit Stinka with. When he saw Stinka pulling up in his truck, a Chrysler pulled up and threw the lights on. Jeff pulled off, dumping the coke out of the back window as he drove off from the "narcs."

When a back up squad car blocked his car off. All the coke was gone so he put his hands on the steering wheel. After searching his car, they came out with eighty five hundred in cash, money he was using to buy Trina an engagement ring and a bracelet that day.

"Oh Sedique, I mean Diamond," he laughed, "I saw that girl Sheryl from the jewelry store. She told me to tell you 'Hi.'" I had met Sheryl while taking my jewelry to get cleaned one day. She was an older "red bone" that was so hairy that both of her eyebrows met. She was very mature and wore sophisticated clothing with nice jewelry sets. When she noticed my bracelet, we just struck up a real nice conversation.

Malachi looked at Jeff and I. "A toast," he said as he raised his glass.

"A toast to what?" I asked.

"A toast to our hard work, safety and new life."

"I can drink to that," Jeff said while raising his glass. I raised mine to meet theirs and added, "to Malachi, Terry and their pregnancy."

We all tapped glasses and sipped our drinks.

When Jeff's trial date arrived, why he decided to tell his mother, we'll never know. We had all ready hired the best lawyer in the area who was known for beating any drug case.

"Due to the fact that Jeff's car had tinted windows on it," he would spank the case on a technicality he assured us, while collecting his retainer fee.

Sure enough, Jeff walked. After the case was thrown out at a suppression, he walked right to his mother's car and she packed him up, withdrew him from school, and took him straight back to his very own basement apartment under her house on 233rd and White Plains Road in the Bronx.

Meanwhile, Malachi was still riding through every hood in his 535. I told him not to ever bring his car to my house because I know it had to be hot. When we had to meet, I suggested that he drive the Mazda that Gomez had or go buy himself another hoopty. My car was kept in the garage so if you didn't see me pulling in, you wouldn't know where I was, except of course for this strange black man who lived across the street from me. I'd noticed that he had a habit of looking out of his window whenever my garage opened.

Norfolk State University was set to play Virginia State University for their annual Orange Bowl classic football game. Since this was one of the biggest games of the year, we decided to rent a hotel ballroom and throw an after party for the game.

After meeting with a banquet representative for the hotel and securing the ballroom with a deposit, Malachi and I had a graphic artist design some simple flyers. On game day, after we had our cars cleaned, we parked

right at the stadium entrance, giving them to everyone that walked by. Prior to game day, Bianca and Terry put some in every single girl's dorm room on campus. Melanie gave some to her girlfriends and Sheryl from the jewelry store even took some to give out.

Before game day even arrived, girls from Virginia State were calling girls from Norfolk State saying they heard that Diamond was throwing a party.

That night after the game, the little party I expected to only hold eight hundred people in a ballroom, had eight hundred inside the ballroom, eight hundred in the lobby, and what seemed like eight thousand outside in the hotel's parking lot. There were so many people that the party outside was as live as the party inside and we never knew it.

Melanie collected the money from ticket sales at the front door. Bianca showed up and made a very subtle scene by rolling her eyes at Melanie and then looking at me with a sympathetic laugh. Terry was right behind her, now showing through the maternity outfit that she wore. Not wanting to add any fuel to this situation, I made sure they both were escorted through with no problem.

When the night ended, I headed up to my hotel room with Melanie to count up my earnings.

"You better talk to that D.C. bitch of yours," Melanie said in her bottle breaking, boogie-down Bronx tone of voice. "I thought you wasn't messing with her no more," she continued to drill as I counted my money.

"I don't Mel. She came with Terry, Malachi's girl," I lied. I had just taken Bianca out after Jeff's trial. "Count this for me," I said, shutting her up by hand-

ing her a stack of small bills. She shut right up and started counting.

"Doo Wop really did his thing. I didn't know you knew him Diamond."

"Yeah, I've known Wop for years. I saw him not to long ago up in the Bronx and asked him to come do this for me."

Seventy-Six hundred dollars. Not bad for a small party that I only spent eighteen hundred for. I might have to do this more often I thought. I gave Melanie a picture that myself, Malachi, Gomez, Dre and a couple of other guys had taken at the beginning of the party, kissed her cheek, then laid back in bed and unbuckled my pants. Just as I got comfortable, Bianca beeped me, putting in her code number one behind the number. I looked down at my beeper, took my pants off and threw them with the beeper still attached over onto the chair. "I'm tired. I'll call him when I go home in the morning," I lied.

"Diamond, you know I have class at seven in the morning, right?"

"Okay, we'll leave at six so you can change in time."

She smacked her lips.

"The money is in my pants pocket. You can call a cab if you want."

"Don't be so smart boy," she replied while pulling her panties from under her red, knee length skirt, then unzipping the back as it dropped down to her ankles allowing her to step over it and into the bed.

"Come here," she commanded while laying behind me and placing her leg over my hip.

I felt the warmth between her thighs and turned

around to face her.

As the year continued and the New Year grew closer, I hosted several more parties labeling them "Diamond Life Productions." Melanie became my girl somehow but Bianca obliged whenever I called for a late night rendezvous. Another crew that attended N.S.U. called themselves W.A.M.; they were from Queens but we hooked up a few times and did a couple of parties as well as made some street moves together. Malachi and Terry were happily engaged with a beautiful baby girl, but he still had a bad habit of fucking the project girls in the spots that he ran.

"Sedique, my cousin P and his man are down her. They want me to help them set up in the Portsmouth spot."

"Yo Chi, that's up to you. I'm not fucking around in the spots anymore. You know that all ready. You and Dre have those all locked down. If you do, just be careful. You don't need to be out in the spots anymore Chi. That's why we have Dre and Gomez. Whatever you do, keep it under control. Don't make the locals jealous by cutting them out of the work."

"Nah Dique," Malachi replied, "P has some dope in so it's another whole ball game."

"Oh well, do you what you want Chi. Just be safe. You know I'm not fucking with that. Between the parties and those keys, I don't have time to get into that, plus, I don't know too much about that shit anyway," I added. "Puffy is having a party in the city tomorrow at the Roseland, so

me and them W.A.M. cats from Queens are going. I'll be back right afterwards though."

"Okay. I'm going to help P set up. I'll see you when you get back.

We hit the George Washington Bridge in no time and were four Acuras deep in four different colors parked in front of the Mart on 125th Street. When Hap and Rube pulled up, that made six. Hap smiled when he saw me sitting on my car.

"Look at Sedique, Ruben."

I got out and hugged the both of them, giving them both a pound while they admired my pine green Limited Edition color and all the flashing hazards of the same model behind it.

"Which one is Malachi in?" Rube asked.

"He didn't come up. His cousin P and some other cats went down and he's helping them set up some dope shit. Plus, his girl Terry had the baby so Malachi doesn't want to be too far away from his daughter," I added.

"So who are those guys?" Rube asked, just as Riza stepped out of his car.

"Riza, what's up? Good to see you."

"What's up Hap. Nice to see you too. How are you?"

Ruben had never met them so Hap and I introduced Rube to the crew from the south side of Jamaica Queens. After all of the introductions were made, we all hit the west side highway to Fifty-First and then took Broadway

six cars deep into the garage of the Marriot Marquise in Times Square. Hap had paid for some rooms for us to shower and change in before the party.

Later that night at the Roseland Ballroom, Muslim F.O.I. Security was everywhere. We parked in the garage down the block and proceeded through the crowd directly up to the front door.

"Who do they think they are?" I heard one girl say. I turned around and noticed a brownskinned girl about 5'5" wearing a red leather tight suit with a Dooney and Bourk hand bag and a pair of Charles Jordon shoes. I instantly registered all of it because Melanie had the same suit in her closet.

"You in the red, come on," I yelled.

She looked around and pointed to herself as if to say, "who me?"

"Yes, you, " I answered.

"My girlfriend is with me. I can't leave her in this long line by herself."

"Bring her with you," I replied.

The eight of us walked up to the front door. Security was standing on the inside of the glass door looking at the crowd outside. When he saw us, Happy put up eight fingers telling him that there was eight of us. Security opened the door and we all entered with Hap being the last one and sliding him a small stack.

"Thank you," the girl in the red said, followed by her girlfriend.

"You're welcome. What's your name?" I asked.

Extending her hand to shake mine she replied, "Danita, and this is my friend Monique, but we call

her Mo for short. What's your name?" she asked in astonishment.

I looked over at Hap and then smiled while still holding onto her hand. "You can just call me Who the hell do you think I am?" I released her hand, "Have a nice night," and the six of us headed towards the bar.

The Roseland ballroom was elegantly decorated for Puff Daddy's birthday party. A dimly lit setting with the who's who of the music industry inside, from Russell Simmons to Baby Face, everyone came out to celebrate and congratulate Puff Daddy on his new record company - Bad Boy Entertainment.

We surrounded the bar and ordered twelve bottles of champagne, six bottles of Dom Periogn, and six bottles of Moet. For spending that much money in the club, the manager and his staff delivered the bottles to us in shiny silver ice buckets on carts with a rack of wine glasses and a white table linen with lemon, lime, and cherry cups on it.

Danita and her girlfriend were staring at us with a "can I just suck your dick" look on their faces. I waved them over and gave them two full glasses and two neon wrist bands to get in and out of the V.I.P. section. Without money - a worm, with money - a dragon, I thought to myself as they held their glasses and danced around us like they'd known us forever.

As the night proceeded, we all continued to drink and party to the sounds of Funkmaster Flex, Brucie B and DJ S and S, taking turns on the sets.

Puffy came over and I introduced him to Hap and the crew, then chatted for a few minutes about some parties I had in mind. We exchanged cell phone num-

bers and continued to enjoy the nights setting.

Towards the night's end, the girl that was walking around selling flowers approached me saying that "these are from the two ladies sitting at the bar." I looked over and saw none other than Danita and Monique waving at me. "Take your pick," the flower girl said, "they both want you."

I wrote my beeper number down on a napkin with code 212 as the code. Picking up the last bottle of Moet, I handed it to the flower girl along with the napkin. "Here, give this to the one in the red."

"She wants to know your name. Who should I tell her it's from?" she asked.

"Diamond. Tell her it's from Diamond."

"Thug's Mansion"

Back in Virginia the following night, I headed directly to Melanie's house to pick her up before going home.

"Hi Boo," she said positioning herself comfortably in the passenger seat and kissing me on my cheek. "I hope you enjoyed yourself and handled your business," she added.

"Yeah, it was nice Mel. Everybody was there. I'm probably going to do some shows with this new artist Craig Mack and Biggie Smalls. They're both coming out next year."

"Diamond. You really need to talk to your friend Malachi," Melanie emphasized. "He's riding around with a car full of guys acting crazy. They were all on campus today and Malachi made a big scene because he saw his girlfriend Terry talking to some guy. That boy is insecure. You know he has a cousin named 'P' down here with him don't you? That guy looks grimey."

"Yeah, I know Mel. I've told him over and over again to relax and chill out. He acts like we're still broke

freshmen. That's why I don't like him coming over here in that BMW. I know it's probably hot. What can I do though? Malachi's his own man and I love him like a brother. I'll talk to him again tomorrow. Let's go to bed. I'm tired."

Later that night after making love to Melanie instead of us fucking each other's brains out like we so often do, I received three consecutive beeps on my beeper. Just as I reached to grab the beeper from my nightstand, my cell phone rang.

"Why do you have all of that shit on this time of night?" Melanie asked while turning in her sleep.

"I thought I turned it off," I replied with truth.

"Hello," answering my cell phone so that the caller knew I was in a dead sleep."

"Dique, Dique. Wake up!" Dre was yelling.

"I'm up. What?"

"No. Wake up and get up!" Dre reinforced.

"I'm up. Now what?"

"Chi just got shot in the Portsmouth spot. I'm at a pay phone."

"WHAT!" I screamed, jumping out of the bed. "I'm on my way," I said nervously while putting my pants on.

"Where are you going this time of night?"

"Mel. Not now."

"Don't go fucking with that crazy friend of yours Malachi!"

"Mel. Malachi just got shot! I gotta' go! I'll be back."

"Oh my God Boo. I'm sorry," she said as I ran out the door half dressed.

The drive over to the Portsmouth spot was a nervous one. It seemed like as soon as my car started I

was pulling into the Lincoln Park housing projects. As soon as I entered the projects I saw a crowd of people. I parked my car and ran over to Malachi, lifting the crime scene tape over my head.

"Chi, Chi!" I yelled, looking at the hole in his chin and four others seeping through a white blood stained sheet that covered his chest. "Malachi, get up!" I pleaded in tears as he looked up at me in an endless stare. I sat there beside my roommate, brother and best friend, begging him to get up, but it was too late.

An officer asked me my name while another took pictures of my car. I stepped away from Malachi, crying, as my best friend lay dead in the street.

Dre walked over to me and put his arm around me. "Dique, take your car out of here and come back. Gomez is in the Mazda at the gas station. He'll bring you back."

"You take it," I told him.

"I'm not going anywhere Dique," Dre replied.

I looked at the tears welling up in Dre's eyes and then looked over at the white sheet that now covered Malachi's body.

"Where the fuck is the coroner and who did this to him?!" I managed to ask through my cries.

"Dique, I'll tell you everything," Dre said as he wiped his eyes.

When P and Gomez pulled up, the coroner's truck was right in front of them. They both jumped out of the Mazda running towards Malachi as the coroners lifted his body onto a stretcher to put him in the back of the hearse. P and Gomez shook his body. "Chi - Malachi. No, ... no. Get up Chi!" They cried. Malachi's body jerked and sat up.

"Yo kid. I thought he was gone," I said to Dre as a smile overcame me.

"Dique. He is gone. That's just the body's nerves concluding its last cycle."

I looked over at Gomez and his cousin P. They both looked back at me but nothing was said.

"Come on. Let's get out of here," I told Dre as the hearse pulled off with Malachi inside.

"Gomez, I'll talk to you later," Dre said. "I'll explain everything to Dique," he added as we pulled off.

"Dre, what happened?"

When the story was over, he'd told me that Malachi was in some girl's apartment who lived in the projects while P and Gomez were down the street moving the dope they had just put out. Some guys called Malachi outside to talk to him and then one pulled out a gun and tried to rob him. Malachi grabbed for the gun and as soon as he grabbed it, a shot went off and Malachi grabbed his face. More shots rang out - all hitting him in the chest and stomach.

"How do you know all of this?" I asked while driving and looking over at Dre.

"I came outside with a knife when I heard the first shot, but the other guy pointed a gun at me and told me to run. That's when I ran to the pay phone to call you."

"What about P and Gomez? What were they doing?"

"Both of them had their Glocks on them. Like I told you, they were down the street at the other end of the projects. When they heard the shots, they ran to the car. Malachi was in the house when they left so they assumed he was safe.

"So who did this Dre? Do you know the faces?"

"No, but when I was at the pay phone calling you, this kid came up to me and said that 'WT' and a guy named 'Quick' did it. He said he heard them planning it because Chi was fucking 'Quick's' ex-girlfriend and riding his BMW through the projects but not hitting them with no work."

"SHIT!" I cursed as I pulled into my garage. "I have to call Ni'chelle and his family and tell them this shit!"

When I entered my house, Melanie was still wide awake. She looked at me and knew that Malachi was gone. "Oh Boo. I'm so sorry," she said as she ran over to console me.

"Mel, I have to call his family."

I picked up my cordless phone and proceeded to dial Ni'chelle's number first.

"Hello, Ni'chelle?"

"Yes, this is she. Who's calling my house this time of morning?" she asked in a sleepy tone of voice.

"Ni'chelle, this is Sedique."

"Oh, hi Sedique. Are you coming through?"

"No, no. I'm in Virginia."

"Oh. Are you okay?" she asked before adding, "Why'd you call so late?"

"Ni'chelle," I hesitated. "Malachi's dead."

"No! Noooo! No!" she cried as the instant shock overcame her.

"Ni'chelle, ..." nothing was said and all I heard was her sobs in tune with mine. "Ni'chelle."

"Sedique, what happened?" she asked.

"He was shot. It just happened not too long ago so I'm still getting the details."

"What about Gomez. Where's my brother?" she cried.

"He's with P. He should be calling you soon. I'll be up in a couple of days. I have to call Terry, okay?"

Ni'chelle fell silent and slowly placed the phone on the dials. I pressed the button to end the call and then dialed Bianca's number. After several rings I'd concluded that Bianca was not in her room. I hung up and looked at my hand held phone as I dialed Malachi's house number knowing he wouldn't answer and Terry would. The phone rang one time and Bianca answered.

"Hello."

"Hello B? What are you doing over there?" I asked.

"Terry needed to rest because the baby's been keeping her up all night."

"Bianca," I said, calling out her entire name.

"Sedique, what's wrong," she asked, hearing the crackle in my voice and realizing that I used her whole name instead of just "B."

"Bianca, ..".

"What? Sedique, what?" she asked nervously, now crying herself.

"Malachi's dead."

She screamed and dropped the phone. In the background I heard her crying and calling for Terry. Terry picked up the phone crying.

"Terry, I'm on my way over. I'll tell you what I know as soon as I get there."

When I hung up the phone I knew I had to rush to Terry's aid. Bianca was terrified so the two of them together was heart wrenching. I grabbed my cell phone, "Mel, I gotta' go to Terry's house. I'll be back later," I said as Dre and I headed out.

Once in the car, I beeped Happy and left 911 as my code. When Hap called back he asked me a million questions. Ni'chelle had already told Malachi's aunt and now the entire building knew.

"Sedique, are you okay?" Hap asked.

"No. I'm not okay Hap, but I'm not injured. I'm on my way to his house. His girl is there. She's twisted Hap. We'll be up in a day or two."

When Dre and I arrived at Malachi's house, Bianca, Terry and the baby were up with all the lights on, sitting in the living room. As soon as the door opened and Terry saw Dre and I, she went into a crying rave. "Nooo! nooo! Sedique, nooo!" I hugged her and sat her down as Bianca held Ashley. Hugging Terry and looking over at Ashley, all I could see was Malachi. She was a spitting image. I explained everything to Terry as she wept in my arms.

"We're all packing up and leaving for New York once we find out the funeral arrangements."

As soon as I said that, the phone rang.

"Hello," I answered.

"Dique, Dique."

"Yeah, who's this?" I asked.

"It's Jeff. Gomez just called me and told me what happened."

"Jeff. I'll see you in a few days, okay? We're all coming up."

"Are you okay?" he asked.

"I'm not injured, I wasn't out there if that's what you're asking, but no, no, I'm not okay. I'll see you in a few days."

"Okay, Dique, be safe."

A few days passed and Malachi's body was flown back to New York for his funeral. We all headed up to assist in his final farewell. The services were held at a beautiful church in Albany. The church had a cathedral ceiling and stained glass windows with images of Biblical descriptions. Malachi had a funeral to die for. The morning of Malachi's funeral was all too silent. Everyone called each other on their cell phones and spoke in a whispering low tone. Terry and the baby were at Chi's mother's house and the rest of us all stayed at a nearby hotel. Happy and Ruben rented a van and brought everybody from the neighborhood up to Albany to say their final goodbyes.

Terry drove Malachi's BMW and Bianca rode with her. Gomez and P drove the Mazda and Dre and I lead the way in my car. There were so many of us staying at the hotel that we occupied an entire wing consisting of nine rooms.

That morning after everyone was dressed, we all proceeded to Malachi's mother's house. When we entered her residential neighborhood and turned onto her street, there had to be at least ten limousines parked in line leading all the way up to Chi's mother's door. When we all got out of our cars, Hap pointed and directed each of us to different limos. He had arranged to rent all of them just in case transportation was short.

As the procession began and we all headed to the church, it didn't really set in my head that I was

about to see Malachi for the last time. Bianca rode in the limo with me and laid on my shoulder the entire ride. She knew that Melanie was in my house back in Virginia but she was on my arm now and that's all she concerned herself with.

"Sedique, are you okay?" she asked as we pulled up in front of the church that now housed Malachi's body.

"Yeah, ... yeah, ... I'm okay B. Thanks for being here with me," I replied.

"I'm always here for you Sedique. Don't you ever forget that! Plus, you know I'm going to miss Malachi. Who's going to meet you after classes now Dique?"

"Yeah, I know, " I replied as we stepped out of the car and onto the pavement. I took a deep breath, held Bianca's hand and headed into the church behind some of Chi's distant family.

Entering the church as the organist played a hymn, Malachi laid dressed in an all white suit at the front of the church in a white and chrome casket covered with floral arrangements.

As soon as I looked at him, tears started to fall. I held Bianca's hand tightly as I fought the reality that Chi was at peace. The organist continued to play through the weeps that turned into tears and screams as Terry sat in the front row beside Chi's mother and stepfather. Bianca went up front to comfort Terry and Hap slid over next to me. Ni'chelle sat holding Ashley while rocking back and forth and staring at Malachi.

After the church was filled, the preacher began his sermon. As soon as the organist stopped playing and the preacher started talking, Terry started to cry

uncontrollably, screaming and begging for Malachi to get up. Seeing her cry so bad affected everyone. Chi's mother laid on her husband's shoulder as she shook her head through the preacher's sermon. Ni'chelle and her mother sat crying and holding onto each other.

The moment it dawned on me that I would never be able to laugh, joke or fuss with Chi about driving his car around town, our life together played through my mind like flash cards - us on the Ave, on the strip, in our dorm room, everything.

As the preacher continued, I got up and walked up to Malachi. I reached for Ashley from Ni'chelle's arms so that I could hold her and let her kiss her father for the last time. Once I held her, I began to cry. Malachi worshipped the ground that she crawled on and she was undeniably his little girl. I stood there holding and bouncing her as the preacher and other friends and family said their last respects to Chi through sobs and tears.

I leaned over, holding Ashley at Malachi's face and she smiled and kissed him on his cheek as she recognized her daddy and began trying to squirm her way out of my arms. Terry got up and kissed Malachi and then took their daughter.

At the end of the service, Terry and the baby stood beside Malachi as everyone proceeded to approach Chi to say their goodbyes before leaving the church. Chi's mother sat in front as everyone that came by kissed her, Ashley and Terry.

When the church was empty, everyone stood outside as Gomez, Ruben, Happy, Dre, Jeff and myself carried Malachi and placed him in the hearse. The

cemetery was about a twenty minute ride away from the church. When we arrived there, Malachi's mansion and plot were waiting for him directly beside his older brother.

As his casket was lowered into the ground, I placed a picture that he and I had taken years ago amongst the many flowers that were buried with him. Crying relentlessly as I watched Malachi's casket sink beneath the earth's surface, Hap grabbed me with tears in his eyes. "Dique, when you go back to Virginia, you find out exactly who's responsible for this," Hap whispered in my ear as he hugged me. "I'll be bringing Black down in a few days. Until then, you stay clear Sedique. Somebody has to pay for this. You talk to Dre again and get as much information as you can. Black will take care of it from there."

The burial ended and Malachi was now tucked safely away in his new home beside Christopher, his oldest brother. Everyone hugged each other and I said my good-byes before leaving for the hotel to rest for the long ride back.

"Just, Blaze!"

I couldn't even think clearly with all that had happened. It seemed like holding on to my own sanity was a challenge in itself. There is a big difference between distance and death. One you can overcome, while the other overcomes you in its own suddance.

"Sedique, I know how you feel. We're all devastated, but you have to try to relax. None of this is your fault," Hap said as my mind obviously drifted away from the dinner table and the fine meal that Melanie prepared for us.

"Boo, are you okay?"

"Yeah Mel, I'm all right. Thank you. I just drifted off for a minute."

"Well excuse me gentlemen," Melanie said as she rose from the table and kissed me on my cheek. "I need to go and call Terry to check on her."

"Sedique, we all know that his cousin came down here to open up, and we know that you have to realize now that what has happened will undoubtedly

affect us all if nothing is done about it."

"Yeah, I know Hap. And I know what has to be done. I just wish I could do it myself," I said while staring Happy directly in his eyes from across the table and forking the stew chicken in front of me.

"Black?"

"Yeah, what's up Hap?"

"What do you want to do?"

"What do you mean what do I want to do?!"

Black responded with a mouth full of chicken and death in his eyes. "I didn't travel all the way down here for nothing. I could've picked up a job right in the city. Since Dre explained the whole thing to Sedique, we know who's behind it. We know who's responsible and we know who did the hit. We'll send Quick a message and as for his young gun, 'W.T.' , he signed his own death certificate the night he went against us. Sedique, just lay back and relax. "Watch my work. You're going to like this one," Black said with a pleasing, yet devilish look on his face.

We all continued to eat while discussing what was to be done. Things just weren't the same. Our moves were always quiet. Hustlers made noise. Gangsters made money. A subtle reputation was on the line and although my hustler days were over, they were fucking with gangster's pride so it had to be protected. I once read that from the beginning of time, competition for external power has lied at the root of all violence. Years later, it's still a truth.

After dinner, Hap and Black prepared to head back to their hotel rooms.

"Sedique, you're okay, right? I'm leaving tomorrow.

Black will still be in his room. I have to get back up top with Ruben."

"Yea, I'm cool. Black how are you getting around?"

"Hap introduced me to this girl down here. One of her girlfriends works at Budget, so I'm renting a car tomorrow when we take Hap back to the airport."

"Oh really?" I remarked in amazement. "Hap, you never told me about any girl you had down here."

"Yeah, yeah, I know. It's nothing major. She saw me that weekend me and Ruben came down to the strip and she basically chose me."

"Whatever."

"Sedique."

"Yeah, what's up Black?"

"I'm going to hang out with Gomez and Dre for a while to see if I can dig up some information on this W.T. nigga."

"Black," I said firmly, looking directly in his eyes. "No mistakes. No mess ups, and no family. Just him!"

"I got you Digue. I got you. Not a problem."

As Happy and Black left and I walked them to the door, closing it behind them. Melanie came up and hugged me. "Boo, what are you all doing?" Please don't get into any trouble Sedique."

"Its okay Mel. I'm right here with you. That's the only trouble I'll be getting into."

She looked at me and smiled softly. "I bet you will, won't you?"

"You know it," I said before smiling back and kissing her on her forehead.

"I know you're still going through it about what happened, but you'll be okay baby, I promise you."

I hugged her and walked behind her into the kitchen, admiring her curves and bowed legs as they now flowed from the powder blue teddy that she had changed into.

"Mel, only four of us ate. Why are there so many dirty dishes?" I asked noticing the pile in the sink.

"What do you think, the food prepared itself, Diamond?" she replied, looking even sexier with suds on her hands as she handed me the dishes to place in the dishwasher. As I helped here with the dishes, I teased her. Once the dishes were done, we cleaned the table and again I teased her. Afterwards, she turned the lights off and headed upstairs. Moments later, I was deeply ... in trouble.

The next morning my phone rang at eight-fifteen a.m. "Sedique, wake up, this is Black. I'm with Gomez."

"Okay, good," I interrupted before he said too much over the telephone. "We'll have lunch later or something."

"Okay, I'll be over there at twelve. I have the rental car already."

"Shit," I cursed to myself. I don't want Black to appear to be to familiar to me. In the art of deception, one must remain formless in order to transform, and him with us would be a dead giveaway. He has to appear to be a stranger almost.

At my house that afternoon, we discussed how in order to catch W.T. he has to appear to be on his own. If anyone in the area knew that he was affiliated with us, that would automatically put them on the defensive. If he could get W.T. on his team, then he could do with him as he pleased at any given moment.

The plan was set. Black, who now referred to him-

self as "Midnight," was to open up in the same spot with some small work. No one would ever know that he was from New York. Either W.T. would want to join him or rob him, which in either case would put Black close enough to him to do what had to be done.

Things were at a disturbing pace for a while. Terry's emotional state was visibly unstable. Bianca didn't want to leave her alone in a house by herself, so she packed a few things and stayed over for a few days. Although we had proceeded into different directions, we were still one in the same. Melanie and Bianca put their differences aside. At least momentarily. Terry needed support and "who I was fucking was of the least importance."

As time passed, memories continued to live. Pictures of us all at parties, on the campus, and out on the strip with our new joints hung on the walls of numerous houses. Ni'chelle called almost everyday to check on everybody, plus let us know how everyone was holding up in the city.

Black was now fully established and stayed at the safe house with Gomez if he wasn't staying at some girl's house in the spot. He had adopted a crystal clear southern accent and everyone loved "Midnight." His thing was that he employed everybody. Even the crackheads had positions as runners.

"Sedique, things are running real smooth right about now. The whole projects call me Miami Black or Midnight and W.T. wants to get down."

"Stay focused Black. You only have one mission and two days."

"Yeah, I know. If you speak to Hap, tell him I'll be

home in two days. This money's in the bank."

Exactly two days later, Rumors spread quickly that W.T.'s body was found in the trunk of his mother's car, brains spilled, parked in their driveway. He was a known stick-up kid so nobody was singled out for the hit. His closest friend, Quick, was the only suspect because according to the streets, he was seen driving the car just the night before.

"Boo, ... are you alright?" Melanie asked as we sat up in bed watching the late night news.

"I'm fine, Why'de you ask?"

"Just wondering. You look tense," she said positioning herself behind me and massaging my shoulders.

"Top story. A brutal homicide in the city of Portsmouth." The news reporter stated as he continued to give the gruesome details. "The body of a man in his mid-twenties was discovered today in the trunk of a family car ..." The news channel flashed a picture of W.T.'s face adding that "their only suspect at the time was his close friend who was seen just hours earlier driving the car." Melanie pulled me back and looked at me. I kissed her and continued to enjoy my massage.

"Don't you have a class tomorrow morning Mel?"

"Yes."

"Okay, let's turn the T.V. off and get some sleep."

"Boo," she said in her sexy baby voice, turning my head around to look directly into my eyes, ... "Never mind," ...

"What Mel? You're okay, right?"

"Yes, I'm fine. Black called me today while you were out."

"Yeah, ... and, ... what did he say?"

"Nothing special. He just wanted you to know that he was home safe. Oh, and he said something about he knew you would like it."

"Okay. Thanks baby." I pecked her on her lips and hit the light switch. "Good night."

1992
"Life After Death"

Months later, after emotions seemed to settle, the W.A.M. family and myself gave a big party at a club in Norfolk called Pizzazzios. Since the night of the party was also Malachi's birthday, we all wore black t-shirts with a color picture of his face on the front and "Diamond Life & W.A.M." on the back.

Terry and Bianca came out and enjoyed the night while staying in the V.I.P. section and ordering drinks from the open bar. Every time I glanced over in their direction, I caught Terry crying off and on while Bianca held her and looked at me. The picture of Malachi's face on all the t-shirts was a picture that Terry had taken right after she'd told him that she was pregnant with Ashley.

Melanie was on the front door so her and Bianca were separated the entire night. The girl Danita that I'd met at Puffy's birthday party at the Roseland even

came down for this event. I sent her a round trip ticket and put her up in a hotel on the ocean front. When the night ended, I walked over to talk to Bianca and Terry. Melanie came up and hugged me from behind to make sure that I wasn't trying to sneak off with Bianca, and Danita sat at her table talking to Dre, watching me in action and shaking her head.

"Melanie, take my car and go home. I have some business to take care of with the club, plus, me and Dre need to talk. I'll be home later," I said while walking towards Dre and Danita who were chit chatting away.

"Diamond, that girl looks too old for Dre," Melanie said with a slight laugh.

"I know, I thought the same thing," I lied knowing that Dre had just met Danita at the airport tonight when he picked her up for me.

"Okay, I'll call you to let you know I got home safe," she said before speaking to Dre and waving at Danita.

"Okay, and Mel ..., drive safely or you'll be paying for my car," I added in a low laughing tone of voice.

"Are you ready?" Dre asked as I approached the table he shared with my imported therapy for the night - Danita.

"Yeah, let me get our coats, then you can drop us off at the hotel."

"Diamond, I see you really have your shit tight down here in VA. Which one of those was your girl?" Danita asked with a cynical smile.

I pointed at her and said, "that one," before smiling and winking into her stare.

Looking me up and down as if to appraise my worth,

"Oh really? We'll see about that," she remarked still smiling.

Exiting the club after everything was counted and over, I let Danita walk in front of me so I could get a glimpse of her ass. It was so soft that with every step that she took, her ass jiggled twice on each side.

When we entered the hotel room, Danita was highly impressed. I had all ready reserved the top floor suite with the jacuzzi in the middle of the floor at the same hotel that Dre had gotten her a regular room.

"Diamond, this isn't my room."

" I know. This is our room. Your room is downstairs. You can go down if you want."

"Don't be silly boy. All of my clothes are in my room downstairs. I do need to get them though."

"How much clothing did you bring?" I asked while looking at her peach colored fitted pants holding her peach shaped ass.

"Enough for two days. My return flight is in two days."

"Okay, you can get your clothes tomorrow morning then."

"So what am I going to sleep in tonight, or do you think you're slick?"

"Okay, go get your clothes then. I'm about to eat."

Danita went down to her room to get her belongings. When she returned, she sat her bag in the chair and dug into her Denny's late night take-out. "I'm hungry. I think might've drank too much."

I looked over at her with a "I'm going to wear your ass out" smile on my face while chewing the last of my food. Once I finished eating, I showered and came out in my boxers and a T-shirt. Danita showered after me

and returned in a pair of pink loose fit shorts and a t-shirt, and laid in bed beside me.

We talked and one thing led to another as I kissed her and began to lick circles on her breast. I ran my hand slowly up and down her thighs heading gently towards her mid-section.

"Nope."

"Nope what?" I asked while kissing on her neck and sliding my hand under her shorts.

She removed my hand. "No Diamond. I'm on my period."

"You're what?!" I asked looking straight in her face.

"Hello.... my period," she answered as if I didn't hear her the first time.

"Shit, just my luck," I replied under my breath while wondering if I should try her again anyway.

"What, do you want me to leave now?"

"Hell yeah," I wanted to say, but instead I said, "Leave? For what? No Danita, relax," I replied while rolling over on my back and holding her hand.

"Are you upset Diamond?"

"Upset for what?" I fronted. "I respect that your period is a time for you," I said while placing her hand on my erection under my boxers.

"What are we going to do tomorrow?" she asked while feeling me throb in her hand.

"I don't know. Maybe go out to a movie or something," I stretched back, yawning, hoping my pipe would slide out through the hole in the front of my boxers and she would suck it for me or something. Instead, she patted me like a baby then rolled over.

"Good night Diamond."

"Shit," I cursed under my breath again. "Good night."

The next morning as soon as Danita opened her eyes, I was fully dressed and on my dial toned cell phone.

"What? What? Oh shit! No, okay. I'll get there as soon as I can."

When Danita said good morning, I replied and added, "Listen, I have to take you to the airport. Something happened to my man in D.C. and we have to head out there. I'll call you as soon as I come back to New York. Here's five hundred. Call me when you get home safely. Dre's on the way to pick us up now."

When I pulled up in front of my house that morning, Melanie was just beeping me. She noticed Dre's car outside and stood at the front door as I chatted with Dre before he pulled off.

"I made a big breakfast," she said as I entered the house. "Okay, let me get a shower. I've had these clothes on all night and I smell like cigarette smoke."

"Boo, I have to tell you something. Last night, as soon as I left the club in your car I got stopped by the cops."

"You what?"

"They stopped me and said they thought I was driving under the influence. You know, drunk driving. When I told them I didn't drink, the white officer said, 'Okay, you can go now, but tell your boyfriend Sedique we said hi.' And Boo, guess what?"

"What? "

"The other one, the black cop is the man who lives right across the street."

"What!?" I blurted. Just my luck I move on officer asshole's block. Now I knew what all the funny looks

were for. I was willing to bet that his doughnut eating partner was the Broffman guy that searched Chi some time ago. Dre told me that he had pulled him over not too long ago.

I went to take a hot shower and digest what Melanie had just told me. When I came back down to eat breakfast, I sat quietly for a moment. "Melanie, I have to tell you something."

"What Boo?" she inquired while holding her orange juice.

"I'm leaving Virginia for a while. I'm going up to New York until things cool off."

"What about me? What about school?"

"You can come home every weekend if you want and school will be there when I decide to return. You have to understand Mel, shit hasn't been the same since Malachi's death. Every little thing Gomez or P does is falling back on me, so I need to get away." I kissed her across the table. "I'm not leaving you. You and your roommates can stay here at the house if you want, and I'm going to buy you something to get around in."

She smiled at me. "I love you. I understand. I'm coming up every chance I get to spend time with you."

"Okay, good," I replied. "If you need anything while I'm away, just beep me and let me know. Dre will get it to you. Anything," I assured her.

My transition from Virginia to New York was a smooth and quiet one. I had purchased an immaculate co-op apartment in the

hideaway Throggs Neck section of the Bronx. The interior decor consisted of snow white carpet that ran throughout the entire apartment, mirror sliding closet doors and matching mirror flower pots and light switches, a 55 gallon tank with two large iridescent sharks in it, and a tracking light system that ran in sections from my entertainment system to my chrome weight bench in the corner. Adjacent to that was a teal green leather sofa that I'd picked up at Tiffany's. The apartment turned out to be so nice that when I picked Danita up to bring her over she swore a woman lived there with me.

"Danita, no women lives here," I remarked as she admired the complementary house slippers she wore while walking on my carpet.

"Diamond. You did not decorate this all by yourself. Don't lie to me."

"What? I've had this spot for awhile," I lied. "The only time I stay her is when I don't want to be bothered or need to get away for a while."

"Are you saying that I'm the first female you've brought to this apartment?" she asked while opening my bedroom door and noticing my leather sley bed that matched my sofa.

"Yes Danita. You are as a matter of fact."

The night from the hotel room a few weeks ago replayed itself. We sat watching T.V. for a while. I showered and came out of the bathroom in my boxers and no shirt.

"Danita, can you lotion my back for me?" I asked while handing her the lotion and sitting between her legs on the bean bags.

"Damn you're tense Diamond. Relax. What's wrong with you?"

"Nothing. There's a lot going on in V.A. right now, that's all."

"Well, you're right where you need to be," she said as she began to place her hands over my shoulders and on to my chest, lotioning me while pulling me tight between her legs.

"Damn, that feels good," I said while leaning my head all the way back into her lap. Danita leaned forward and kissed me and before I knew it I was removing her velour DKNY sweat pants from her as she arched herself up to assist me.

"Yes, no period," I said to myself as I picked her up and carried her into the bedroom.

When I placed her down onto my bed she removed her shirt leaving her beautiful erected nipples pointed right at me. The sight of her cinnamon complexion, long black hair and naked body sitting in the middle of my teal green sley bed aroused me to the fullest extent.

She grabbed me and began to stroke me softly in her hand as I kissed up and down her breast and stomach. Danita began to moan as she caressed me and we both climbed under the comforter.

"You like that?" she asked while massaging my balls and running her tongue over my chest.

"Yeah," I managed to moan as I relaxed and enjoyed the heat from our chemistry under the sheets.

She continued to nibble on my chest and began to travel south to my stomach and belly button. As I laid with my eyes closed enjoying the sensation that she

gave me, Danita pulled the covers completely over her head and began to kiss and lick between my thighs before taking one of my balls in her mouth.

"Ooohhh," I moaned to signal my acceptance as she started to lick up and down my shaft and take me into her mouth.

"You like that Diamond? Tell me when you're coming, okay?"

"Yeah . . . , okay, " I replied as I began to gently push in and out of her moist warm mouth.

Danita started sucking and jerking me relentlessly into her mouth while she used her free hand to raise my knee.

"Oh shi ... t Danita."

"You coming? Come for me Diamond," she pleaded.

"Ooohhh, oohh, I ..., I just as I started to release, Danita went under while her hand was still jerking me and stuck her tongue right at my asshole and started licking in circles.

I released so heavy and heaved for breath that she thought I was having a heart attack. Her hair was soaked when she came up from under the tent she'd made with the covers.

"I bet you won't send me home so fast no more, will you?"

I couldn't move, couldn't talk, and couldn't do anything. Finally after my senses returned, "What the hell was that?" was my only question.

"That was my Diamond special," she replied with a smile.

For the rest of the night, Danita and I went at it all over my apartment. When I dropped her off at her

mother's place on Amsterdam Avenue the next morning, I was thoroughly convinced that I would not be sending her packing any time soon.

After dropping Danita off I had considered going downtown but decided that it was too early so instead I came back to my bachelor pad that now housed Danita's scent and called my girlfriend Melanie.

"Hello, good morning Mel. I just called to say 'hi' and see how you're doing."

"I'm fine. I might come up this weekend. I miss you boy."

"I miss you to. Just let Dre know and he'll take care of your travel plans.

"Okay."

"Okay, I'll call you later. Be good."

Later that afternoon, although I didn't really want to, I shot down to 122nd Street. Pulling up on the block without Malachi felt strange. His family all stared and Ni'chelle came over to my car and hugged me as soon as she saw that it was me.

"Hi Ni'chelle."

"Hi Dique. It's good to see you," she replied before adding, "Shit has been real crazy on this block lately. My family is still messed up behind Malachi's death."

"Yeah, I think we all are Ni'chelle."

"Happy and Ruben just pulled off. If you would've pulled up five minutes ago you would've caught them. Dique, your Aunt Freckles is worried about you. She just took a cab uptown somewhere. Call her Sedique. Just talk to her."

"Okay, I'll call her tonight. I'm going to be in the city for a while so maybe I'll take her out to City

Island to eat or something."

"You can take me out to eat too," Ni'chelle stated before asking, "Sedique, if you're going to be in the city for a while and you're not staying in the building, then where are you staying? You can have a key to my apartment if you want one you know."

"Thanks Ni'chelle, but I have a little spot uptown in the Bronx."

"Oh do you? So when are you going to invite me over, or is your girlfriend Bianca up here also?"

"You can come over whenever you'd like, plus I don't really mess with Bianca too much anymore."

"Okay, so let's go now then. Nobody's upstairs at your Aunt's apartment and Hap and Rube just left. I want to ride in your coupe anyway, plus, you look tired, you need some rest. I'll cook for you. You do have food don't you?"

"Yes Ni'chelle, I have food."

"Okay, so let's go."

I threw her my car keys, "Here, you drive."

She smiled and walked over to the driver's side as I took a seat to be chauffeured in the passenger side.

"Sedique, this is nice," she said as she positioned herself behind the wheel and adjusted her seat belt while taking notice of the special edition wood grain finishes throughout the interior.

Yeah, you like? I ordered this one off of the showroom floor," I stated while pushing the automatic button to lean my seat all the way back.

Ni'chelle adjusted the driver's seat to her comfort, started the car and adjusted the rear view mirror before she stuck her tongue in the mirror, "Look Dique, I just

got this one, it's a diamond."

Laying back in the soft leather seat, I turned to look over at Ni'chelle. "This is too much," I said to myself as she pulled into traffic. I sat back and directed Ni'chelle to my apartment while reminiscing about me and Malachi years ago, dead broke, Labor Day weekend on the beach. "Twelve Play" by R. Kelly was the selection playing on WBLS as I sat there taking in the city sights and reflecting on my life and how after I moved the last fifteen keys it was over for me. I had a nice savings, plus my party and concert money was adding up. Dre was set because he gets five of the fifteen kilos so he's not on the block anymore either.

We arrived at my place and Ni'chelle put on the complimentary slippers that are kept at my front door. I went directly to my refrigerator to make sure I had food there while Ni'chelle used the bathroom.

"Sedique, this is very nice," she yelled from my bathroom.

"Thank you, I decorated it myself so don't even ask about another female."

When she stepped out of the bathroom to join me in the kitchen, all she wore was a small t-shirt, her panties and my complimentary slippers.

"Who said anything about another female?"

I looked at her amazed by her shape as she opened my refrigerator while bending over so that I got a full view of her gifted ass in some pink lace panties.

"What do you want me to cook?"

"Whatever you'd like Ni'chelle," I answered while holding her waist and grinding up against her.

"Stop it boy, I told you to relax. I'm not going any-

where. I just got here."

I tapped her on her ass. "Okay, call me if you need my help. I'll be in the other room watching T.V."

After dinner was finished, Ni'chelle and I both laid on my couch watching a Def Comedy Jam video that I'd picked up at Blockbusters earlier.

"Sedique, what happened between you and that D.C. girl?"

"Nothing Ni'chelle. It just died out. We still speak though."

"She was cute Dique. You should've brought her up with you."

I glanced at her slanted eyed. "We don't speak that much Ni'chelle, plus she's in school. She couldn't leave anyway."

"Dique," Ni'chelle said as she began to doze off, "What's Bianca's phone number? I want to invite her to New York and show her around."

"I have a better idea," I said as my mind began to race. "I have to go down to Virginia this weekend. I'll try to bring her back with me on Sunday, okay?"

"Okay. I'm sleepy. Let me get a little rest," Ni'chelle replied as she positioned her body to curve into mine and fell asleep with her arm draped over me.

The next morning was a Thursday and before taking Ni'chelle back downtown we stopped and had breakfast at a diner on Tremont Avenue.

"Sedique, your place is nice," she, said as we sat and enjoyed the last of our egg omelets and home fries.

"Thanks Ni'chelle, that's my little hideaway you know. Keep that between me and you."

"Oh, you mean like our other little secret between

me and you?"

I smiled. "As a matter of fact, let me ask you something. Did you say anything to Hap or Rube about us?"

"No, not really. Why? You want me to?"

"Na, you don't have to. I'm sure they know," I said knowing that I had all ready told them.

"Sedique, I'm going to be honest with you. The entire building knows that I'm fucking you."

"What?" I blurted.

"You heard me, and I don't care if they know. My business is my business and if they want to sniff my underwear to figure out who I'm screwing, all they gotta' do is ask."

I looked over at Ni'chelle and laughed. "Yo, you are too much woman."

"Yes, I know, but you don't seem to have a problem getting to the bottom of it," she replied while winking at me and forking in the last of her omelet.

After we finished eating, we sat and chatted for awhile about everything from living in Virginia to what's the latest gossip in New York. When we arrived on Lexington Avenue, my Aunt Freckles was standing outside in front of the building.

"Freckles, where you going?" I asked before she even noticed me.

"Oh, hi Sedique. I didn't know whose car that was Ni'chelle was getting out of.

"Hi Ms. Freckles," Ni'chelle spoke.

"Hi baby," my Aunt Freckles replied before adding, "I was waiting on the bus. I have to go to work boy. Some of us do work you know."

I laughed, "Come on, get in. You're not taking no

bus as long as I'm around."

She came over and sat in the passenger seat while Ni'chelle knelt down into the car window.

"Bye Dique," she said while blowing me a kiss and smiling.

"Lourrdy, you kids are too much," my Aunt interrupted before I could even respond.

"Bye Ni'chelle. I'll call you when I come back up."

"Okay. You do that. And don't forget to bring Bianca."

I blinked while watching Ni'chelle walk away. "Auntie, that girl is crazy," I said as I pulled off heading downtown.

"Yeah, well, she asks about you a lot. After Malachi's funeral she talked with me the whole day wondering how you will manage now that he's gone. How are you dealing with things now Sedique? You're riding around in this fancy car in New York when you're supposed to be in school. Your mother said she hasn't spoke to you in months. Now, to top it off, you got Ni'chelle blowing kisses at you. That tells me a lot. That girl ain't blowing kisses at no guy who's not making a lot of money. She spends fifty dollars on one pair of jeans."

I laughed realizing that my Aunt was an old school conservative, and to her fifty dollars could purchase an entire outfit.

"Yeah, I know Freckles. Things have been kind of strange for me ever since Malachi's death. That's why I'm in New York now. I needed to get away for awhile. I'm going down this weekend but only for a day. I'll be right back. Where do you work at anyway?"

"Not far boy. We're almost there. I work in the insurance building right on 42nd Street. You know,

on top of Hulahan's down the block from Dollar Bills. I know you know where that is. You kids spend entirely too much money on cloths."

I pulled up in front of Hulahan's and Freckles kissed me on my cheek. "Thank you baby. Call me when you come back, and call your mother Sedique! I'm going to tell her that I saw you and that you're all right."

"Okay. I'll see you later. I'll call her," I said before pulling back into traffic.

Hap beeped me and when I called him back from my cell phone he said that he'd heard that I was in the city and had been trying to catch him. "Yo, I pulled up right after you left the block," he said. "Ni'chelle told me that you just dropped her off and took your Aunt to work."

"Yeah," I replied. "I'm heading back uptown now. Where are you?" I asked.

"I'm with wifey right now. Get up with us tonight though. We might hit PJ's or Perk's for some drinks."

"I have a better idea Hap. I'm taking Danita to Chad's and Wilson's tonight. I'll reserve another table. Why don't you meet me there? It's on 79th and Amsterdam. Eight o'clock."

"Okay, I'll see you there then."

Even though Melanie was in my home in Virginia and Bianca and Ni'chelle were only a phone call away, something about Danita made me think about her quite often. Even when she knew I had my hands full at the party that we gave for Malachi's birthday, she remained calm and collective without any argument for attention.

The night she spent with me at my apartment seemed different. She held me, massaged me and made love to me even knowing that I was just fucking her. When I came, she looked me straight in the eyes while opening her legs wide and accepting all of me into her softness while kissing me.

Later that evening, Danita looked stunning as I introduced her to Happy, Ruben and their girlfriends in Chad's and Wilson's. The red leather outfit that she wore when they last saw her at the Roseland did nothing for her body compared to the black pantsuit that she wore tonight.

"You remember my friends, right Danita?" I asked as we all were taking seats at our adjoined tables. Hap and Ruben spoke and introduced their girlfriends to Danita.

We all enjoyed the night ordering drinks and listening to the live R & B band that played center stage. Throughout the course of conversation I had mentioned that I was about to leave Virginia for good. Hap and Ruben knew exactly what I was saying and Danita looked at me and smiled.

I placed my hand on her thigh under the table and rested it there while the conversation continued to circle. By the night's end everyone was tipsy and exhausted. Danita drove us back to my place and Hap and Rube went their separate ways.

"State Property"

Friday night came and I had to leave for a quick trip to Virginia. The entire ride down I talked with Danita on my cell phone. When I reached the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, I called Dre and told him to meet me at the I-HOP on Independence Boulevard so that I could pick up the money that he had for me. While driving I noticed that Virginia always looked so clean especially when you're just returning from New York.

As soon as I pulled into the parking lot of I-HOP, Dre was there just stepping out of his car. "Dique, what's up? This is fifteen. Melanie bought a nice little Nissan with the rest. You told her she could get it, right?"

"Yeah, no problem kid. Thanks. Who's that?" I asked Dre while pointing to some other guy sitting in an old car staring at us.

"Oh him. He's one of my custies. He just gave me five G's. It's in with the fifteen you have there."

"Okay, cool. I'm out Dre. The next time you meet me anywhere, come alone. I'm out, ... and listen. Don't tell

Melanie I came down. I'm about to call Bianca."

"Freeze! Freeze! Put your hands in the air!" is all I heard when I saw Detective Richard Broffman and Officer Asshole pointing their standard issued Glock handguns directly at me and Dre. We both looked at his friend in the old car.

"Dre, what the fuck is this?"

"Dique, I don't know. I don't know."

"Don't open your mouth. Don't say a word. Not even your name until the lawyer comes." I told him before they handcuffed each of us.

"What's the charges?" I asked.

"Well Mr. Diamond, your buddy Andre has marked money on him, and as for you, we'll think of one on the way down to the precinct," he said before pulling two stacks of money from my jacket pocket.

"Oh, lookie here. What is this?" the black cop who live across the street from me asked while flipping through the bills.

"That's marked," Broffman replied.

They took us down to the station and separated us. "Dre, don't open your mouth," I yelled from the next cell.

"Okay Dique. I heard you."

After seeing the magistrate, Dre's bail was set at ten thousand dollars and mine was denied.

Listen Mr. Faison," my lawyer said on the first attorney visit. "This case doesn't even involve you. You were just an added extra and a big

catch for them," he continued to fill me in through a steel screen attorney visiting panel. "The operation was a sting that you just happened to walk right into. Dre's friend in the old car was supposed to pick up some drugs from Dre and give Dre five thousand dollars in marked money. Dre showed up but didn't have the drugs so he took the five thousand from the informant anyway and told him he'd bring him the drugs tomorrow. Then you pulled up and he gave you the unknown marked money. They're pissed because Dre won't talk. The snitch doesn't know you so their case is weak. Dre will walk and we'll take it to trial and you'll get time served."

I sat in jail for a few months waiting to get a definite trial date. When my trial finally proceeded, Dre was sitting in the court room directly behind my attorney, smiling and giving me the thumbs up. Broffman and my neighbor, Officer Asshole, were next to the Commonwealth attorney.

"You may call your first witness," the judge said to the D.A. as he looked down at us from the bench while holding his glasses.

"Your honor, the state calls Detective Richard Broffman of the Virginia Beach Police Department. Detective Broffman, do you swear to tell the truth and the whole truth and nothing but the truth?"

"I do."

"Please tell the people of the court your name and job description with the VBPD."

"My name is Detective Richard Broffman. I'm a Virginia Beach Police Officer and I've worked drug cases for eleven years in our proud resort city .:.

He went on to say a bunch of bullshit that according to law is not supposed to be said because it influences and biases the jury in a professional manner.

Since the money was found on me and it was their money, I was found guilty of a lesser charge. When it was all said and done although the prosecutor begged the judge to sentence me to eight years because I wore expensive jewelry and drove a nice car as he so well stated, I received a two year sentence which I could automatically parole on since I sat in jail eight months before trial and sentencing.

Exiting the court room in an orange jump suit, shackles and handcuffs, I gave Dre and my attorney a thumbs up and then gave Detectives Broffman and Anderson the finger and smiled. Broffman looked directly at me and his face turned completely red as he stared piercingly as if assuring himself held see me again.

During my jail stay, Melanie was seen by Dre, Gomez and others with different guys who went to school with her and her ex on numerous occasions. Bianca came back into my life and made my sentence bearable. Danita stayed quietly in my Bronx apartment and wrote me at least once a week. Ni'chelle took all kinds of sexy pictures and made sure I got at least two sets a month.

When I was released, the entire W.A.M. family threw me a nice coming home party and everybody came down to surprise me. Danita and Ni'chelle even showed up to celebrate my homecoming.

Jeff and his girlfriend came up and covered my eyes from behind while Bianca stood in front of me and kissed me.

Happy and Ruben showed up in two midnight black convertible SL500 Mercedes Benz' parked directly in front of the club. Melanie showed up looking guilt faced and distorted as no one even spoke a word to her.

I danced with Bianca for a while until Ni'chelle cut in and cut me out. Danita quietly sat in a corner table and Riza, Rube, Hap and Al popped champagne all night spraying it on everyone.

When the night ended, Bianca and I went to her apartment. Ni'chelle rode with us and she and Bianca chatted like they'd known each other forever.

Danita and her girlfriend Mo went back to their hotel room and Hap, Rube and Riza all met some girls and went in their own direction.

"I'm going to crash on the couch and let you two love birds catch up on old times," Ni'chelle said as we entered Bianca's apartment.

"B, did she say anything to you?"

"No, should she have?"

"No, I'm just asking?"

"I know she likes you Sedique. I can tell by the way she was looking at me at Malachi's funeral. She's cool though. There's something about her that I just like."

I laughed to myself knowing that Bianca was at least half right. We went into her bedroom and stripped while kissing each other.

"Welcome home Diamond."

"Thanks B."

"No, I mean welcome home, home. This is where you belong. Melanie was no good for you."

We kissed and climbed into bed. Bianca cried as I

entered her, "Oh, you feel so good Sedique. I've missed you."

I made love to Bianca thinking about our first night on the ocean front years ago. She then straddled me and began to ride me as if her life depended on it while moaning loudly and mounting me rapidly. "Come in me Dique. Come in your pussy."

I raised my knees and locked onto Bianca as she leaned forward and stuck her tongue in my ear. "You comin'," she whispered while beginning to moan deeper. "Ooohhh Sediii ..."

I arched my back and dug into her from beneath. "I'm com ... OOOHHHH Shit," I said just as I'd looked down and noticed Ni'chelle's tongue licking in Bianca's ass before she attacked my balls and began to suck hard on them while Bianca continued to ride. We both came and Bianca shook as I jerked in and out of her while Ni'chelle held my balls in her mouth relentlessly.

I laid in bed weak and Bianca raised herself off of me slowly. "Welcome home daddy," they both said at the same time.

I looked at both of them amazed at what had just happened and passed out.

"The Matrix."

Welcome home Diamond, " Danita said as she opened the door in a dark blue velour house robe. I kissed her on the cheek and stepped inside.

"What's up Danita? You're not happy to see me?" I asked.

"Yes I'm happy to see you. I thought you were going to be leaving with me after your party last week but when you disappeared from the club I knew you'd be up here sooner or later. As you can see, I've taken good care of your apartment while you were away," she said while taking two steps back and letting her robe drop to the floor leaving her beautiful exposed nudity standing before me wrapped in a diamond blue ribbon.

She picked up two champagne glasses and proposed a toast. "This is to you Mr. Faison. Even though I know you're a player, you're still my Diamond in the Rough." Danita poured her drink all over herself. "Come get your gift."

I looked down at my white carpet that now had

champagne spots on it and then looked up at Danita.

"I'm standing on a throw rug Diamond. Don't make me wait any longer."

I picked her up, carried her to my sley bed and fell asleep on her chest after making love to her all night.

When I went downtown the next morning, I told Happy and Ruben that I was finished. "That was too close for comfort. They literally begged for me to get eight years down there. With the money I have stashed plus the money I make doing shows, I'm okay. Bianca's going back to D.C. so I think I'm going to chill out with Danita and leave V.A. alone completely. My family needs my help and I can't do that from jail."

"Yeah, you're right about that," Hap said before adding, "Remember what I told you in the barber shop years ago. Get in and get out. It's their game."

"I'm glad you're all right kiddo," Rube added.

"We're here if you need us. Give Dre the number and tell him the same thing."

"And Dique," Hap interrupted, "You know your girl Bianca is up here, right?"

"What?" I yelled. "Where. With who?"

"Calm down kid. She's okay. She's down at Ni'chelle's apartment on 102nd Street."

I shook my head. "Thanks Hap. And Rube, I'll be sure to give Dre that message. He's a little soldier, right? That's my little man. He gave me this Rolex as a coming home gift," I added, showing Hap and Rube my oyster perpetual blue face with a diamond set bezel.

"I'm going to the Mirage tonight. That cat 'Black Silk' is doing a party there so I'm going to check it out before I head back down to close up and pack up. When I come

back, I'm taking Danita to Cancun for the week."

"What about Bianca?" Hap asked. "Aren't you going to check Bianca? Ni'chelle won't blow you up will she?"

"Hap, let's just say that Ni'chelle all ready blew me up, and Bianca enjoyed it just as much as I did."

Hap and Rube looked at each other. "No?"

"Yes," I re-emphasized.

"Oh shit kid. You the man Dique," Rube laughed.

That night as I entered the Mirage, everyone spoke to me. I hadn't been steady in New York in a while but "Hi Diamond," "How are you Diamond," "What's up Diamond," was all I heard.

While I was away, the W.A.M. family kept my name on all of their flyers for parties they did with a picture of me in one corner and them in the other.

I met a slim brown skinned female when I was leaving the club that night and gave her a ride to the cab stand. "What's your name again?" she asked while stepping out of my car and handing me a folded piece of paper.

"Diamond," I replied.

"Okay, thank you Diamond. Call me sometime."

I opened the paper and saw her phone number written on it with the name "Dream" written under it in red lip stick.

"Diamond, your other bitch has been beeping you all night," Danita said when I got back to my apartment.

"Shit, I forgot my beeper," I thought to myself. "Don't sweat it, it's nothing. Who am I with right now?"

"Diamond. Don't talk that shit to me. I know you have Bianca and your other bitches. I've seen you at those parties. You just make sure you know that this is your pillow, " she said while hitting the pillow beside her on the bed. "Now come get in bed. I need a massage."

"Danita, I have a surprise for you."

"A surprise, what?" she asked now smiling.

"When I return from Virginia, I'm taking you to Cancun for a week. I'm going down for one or two days to pack up the rest of my things and make sure that Dre is situated. Pack a suitcase because when I come back we're out."

That night Danita and I had the most passionate sex I'd ever had. The way she received me while staring into my eyes and matching my every stroke was amazing. When I released, she held me tightly while sucking on my chest and opening her legs allowing my conscious and physical self to completely sink into her soul. I kissed her and stared down into her eyes and although my lips didn't move, the words "I love you" radiated from my body.

When I arrived back in Virginia and pulled up into the driveway of my abandoned house, as soon as I stepped out of my car, a Chrysler, a Caprice and a squad car pulled up behind me.

"F.B.I.! F.B.I.! On the ground. NOW!" Is all I heard.

"What the fuck," I thought to myself before looking across the street and seeing Detective Richard Broffman waving at me and giving me the finger.

"Flipmode"

Mr. Sedique Faison, you've been named in a one count indictment for conspiracy to possess with the intent to distribute numerous kilos of crack cocaine throughout the Eastern District of Virginia, " is what was said at my arraignment in a huge federal court room that same afternoon.

Danita flew down the very next morning to visit me in jail through a two inch thick glass window. "Diamond, are you all right? What's going on?" she asked.

"I'm okay, but I don't quite know what's going on yet."

"Guess what? I think I'm pregnant. What are we going to do?"

"Don't worry. When I speak to my attorney tomorrow I should know more about this situation and have a bail hearing set. I didn't do anything Danita, it's nothing. I'll beat this case. They don't have anything on me. It's just a bunch of circumstantial 'he said, she said.' Don't stress it. This will be over in a matter of weeks."

As soon as I finished my last sentence, Bianca walked in.

"Diamond, Sedique, whatever you're calling yourself, I hope this bitch stays with you through this one. I can't tolerate it anymore. They're threatening to add me to your indictment."

"What?!"

"Yes. The house phone was tapped and when I told Dre I wanted five thousand to buy myself a car, they heard it. Now they're threatening me with money laundering or some nonsense.

Good-bye Sedique. I love you and I wish you the best. I knew I'd seen this girl somewhere before. You had her at the party with me and you're other bitch Melanie there didn't you? Well, I hope she proves to be better than Melanie while you're away. I'm leaving Sedique. Good-bye."

"Bianca," I yelled through the little hole in the glass. "Take care of yourself. I'll write you or call you."

"Sedique, don't bother. If I want to talk, I'll write you."

Danita and Bianca looked at each other speechless as she turned and walked away.

"Diamond, I'm having this baby and I'm here for you 100%," Danita said, putting her hands up on the glass as she also stood to leave the visiting room. "Stay strong Daddy. I'll call your lawyers tonight and make sure that he's here first thing in the morning."

"Thanks Danita. And don't worry, I'll make it."

Danita smiled and exited the visiting booth blowing me a kiss as she walked away. I looked at her and although my current situation was confusing, knowing that she was carrying my child inside of her gave

me much more clarity about my life.

When I exited the visiting booth and was escorted up to my assigned floor of the jail, strangers spoke to me and gave me pounds all the way down to my cell.

"Diamond, right?" one guy asked.

"Yeah, I'm Diamond. Do I know you?"

"Nah, I'm Dre's friend. He told me all about you, plus, I use to see you riding around in your joint sometimes. I always wanted to get with you but I just never approached you."

"What are you doing here?" I asked.

"I got violated for driving with a suspended license. I have five years on paper. I won't get all of it though. Yo, we heard the Feds got you. Is that true?"

"Yeah, . . . they picked me up as soon as I pulled into my driveway. I don't even know how they knew I was here."

"Diamond, they picked up Dre two days ago but he's out now."

"What?!"

"Yeah, Dre was right across the hall the day before yesterday, but he's not there anymore and the trustees haven't seen him anywhere in the jail."

"Okay. Thanks kid. I'm tired though. I gotta' get some sleep. My lawyer's coming down to see me in the morning.

Sedique, I have to be honest with you," my lawyer said the next morning during the attorney visit. "Something stinks! I have a

bail hearing set for tomorrow morning so maybe I'll get some more information on the case then. Right now, all I can tell you is something is very fishy."

"So Mr. Donaldson, how much is this case going to cost me?"

"Well Sedique, I need to learn more about the case before I can charge you for it, but don't worry about that. You have enough on retainer for the bail hearing and then some, so let's take care of that first."

"Okay, thanks Mr. Donaldson. I guess that's it for now. I'll see you in court tomorrow morning then."

"Take care," he said before leaving the attorney booth.

"You too."

On the elevator ride back up to my floor, the escorting correctional officer looked at me strangely.

"What's up?" I asked.

"So ..., you're the guy Diamond that just came in, huh?"

"Yeah, I'm Diamond. Why?"

"No reason. Don't be alarmed. It's just that I heard your name throughout the jail a couple of days ago. Some inmate named Dre. Do you know him?"

"Yeah, that's my man. Why?"

"He was talking about you all day before he made bail."

"How much was his bail. Do you know?"

"No, all I know is he was here and now he's gone so I assume he posted bail. How much is your bail?" the C.O. asked as we exited the elevator heading toward the block I was being held in.

"I don't have one yet. I have a bail hearing set for tomorrow morning in federal court."

"Oh, you better get a lot of rest tonight. I'll be waking you up at four a.m. to take you down to the bull pen so the marshals can transport you to court in the morning," he said just as we arrived at my dorm. "Good luck Diamond. I heard you were a good guy out there."

"Thanks," I replied while stepping into the electronic sliding steel bars that served as a door.

He looked at me. "Yo Diamond. Remember this. The bad guys keep getting away with murder. I see it all the time. The targeted individuals that are killed either literally or by harsh sentences are not the prime subjects. They are simply the casualty count. The prime subject and goal is to murder a race. You don't have to be physically dead to be killed, you just have to be controlled."

I looked at the C.O. long and hard. "Thanks. I'll remember that."

He stuck his fist up in the air and whispered, "Fight the Power, but get some rest. I'll see you at four."

I entered the block and headed straight to my bunk praying that I would get bail tomorrow morning.

All rise for the Honorable Judge Miller," the court clerk stated as I stood beside my attorney in the same clothing that I was arrested in.

"United States of America versus Sedique Faison, request for bail. The subject is being held for a violation of Title 28 United States Code, Sections 841 and 846 - conspiracy to possess with the intent to distrib-

ute a controlled substance, namely, 50 grams or more of cocaine base commonly known as crack cocaine."

"You may be seated. Is the government ready to proceed?" The judge asked while looking down over his glasses at the Assistant United States Attorney, Detective Richard Broffman, and his partner in crime, Detective Anderson.

"Yes your Honor, the government is ready and clearly opposes any type of bail for Mr. Faison also known as Diamond."

"Hold. Hold. Hold." The judge said and then asked, "Is counsel for the defendant ready?"

"Yes your Honor," my attorney replied as I sat beside him noticing all of the pictures of former judges and presidents that were strategically hung throughout the court room, all seeming to be staring directly down at me.

I turned my head and saw Danita sitting in the court room and she gave me a thumbs up.

"Your Honor, the government opposes any type of bail for Mr. Faison. Our case against him is to strong and a bail may permit him the chance to avoid prosecution for these charges. This man, Mr. Sedique Faison a.k.a. Diamond, a.k.a. Sedique Clark, has access to obtaining fake identification. The government will show that on numerous occasions individuals purchased cocaine from him. These same individuals have cooperated against their own penal interest. Furthermore, the government will produce a witness who will testify that Mr. Sedique Faison has distributed a minimum of five hundred kilos of cocaine to his self and others for further redistribution throughout the Eastern District of

Virginia. The government ..".

"Objection your Honor. Are we trying my client right now?" My attorney stated as he stood looking over at the table representing the United States.

"Your Honor," the prosecutor continued, "This man can not be set free."

"Does the United States rest?" the judge asked.

"Yes, your Honor. The people rest."

"Okay, counsel."

"You're Honor, my client is an American citizen, has been an American citizen all of his life. The allegations that the government hold have absolutely no merit at this time. My client is entitled to a trial. A fair trial I might add. And furthermore, a bail is clearly within vision. I am his attorney and I will be defending him against these allegations. His fiancé is here. She's pregnant and he needs to be afforded the opportunity to position himself and family accordingly. Thank you your Honor. Counsel for the defendant rests."

"Bail is denied for Mr. Faison."

"What?!" I yelled.

"The drug amount involved in this case makes this individual a threat to the community and a flight risk. Bail hearing is adjourned. Detain the defendant.

"No ..., no.... Sedique, " was all I heard. I looked back and saw Danita crying with her head bowed in into the row seat in front of her.

"Tell her it will be okay in a minute," I said to my attorney as I stood. "Come see me as soon as possible so that we can prepare for this case."

"I'll be there first thing tomorrow morning Sedique. If what they're alleging is the case, I'm going to need

twenty five thousand just to get started."

"Not a problem. Just get down to the jail and let me know something. Tell Danita I'll call her when she gets back to New York tonight."

I looked back at the woman who was carrying my child and she wiped her eyes and looked up to meet mine. "I love you, " I whispered, then turned and walked away.

A week had elapsed before my attorney came down to the jail to visit me for the second time.

"Sedique, they're threatening to charge you with a homicide."

"A what?" I yelled before he could finish his sentence. "What the fuck are you talking about?"

"Calm down Mr. Faison."

"No wait. You calm down. Let me tell you this one time and one time only. I sold drugs, yes, but I never killed anyone. Do you understand me?"

"Yes Mr. Faison. Not a problem."

"Don't bring me anything about a homicide. I don't want to hear it."

"Very well then. Would you like to hear the good news or the bad news first?"

"What's the good news?"

"The good news is that once you're attributed to one and half kilos of crack cocaine, the rest is all vain glory for them."

"Mr. Donaldson, what the hell does that mean?"

"It means that your base offense level is thirty eight as it is, so all the other alleged kilos really do not matter."

"That's it?"

"Yep. That's it."

"Okay, what's the bad news?"

"The bad news is they have a list of witnesses and they're using your prior case for the marked money against you in this offense. Wait. It gets worse. Your friend Andre is their leading witness. He's willing to testify against you if you go to trial."

"No, no, not Dre!"

"Yes. His name's right here. Look."

"Shit! " I yelled while looking at the list Mr. Donaldson held in front of me. "That little bastard. How could he do this and who are all of these other names? I don't even know these guys.""

"Well, this is their list. These are their witnesses. All seventeen of them. Eighteen including your buddy Andre and guess what else?"

"Is this funny to you Mr. Donaldson, because all of this guessing shit is really annoying. Just tell me what else."

"Okay then. Here it goes. If you go to trial, you're ex girlfriend, Bianca, gets indicted."

"For what? What does she have to do with any of this?"

"Shit, you know more than I do Mr. Faison. I'd say they're using her for a vice."

"Can you beat this case? Yes or no."

"Well, this is a lot trickier than the State Court. If Dre testifies, that along with your conviction could

very well conclude your fate as guilty. Not to mention whoever else is willing to get up on the stand and perform on behalf of the government."

"But I don't even know these other guys."

"I understand that Sedique. Me and you know that. Now we have to convince twelve middle age to older white people who will serve as the jury of your peers."

"Have you met with Danita?"

"Yes. Well, no. But we spoke earlier today and she's bringing the retainer by my office when she comes down to visit you this weekend. "

"Mr. Donaldson, " I said while leaning back in the chair provided in the attorney panel and starring up at the ceiling. "Prepare for trial. I'll call you in one week to see how far you've gotten."

Back in my cell that night I laid awake in my bunk thinking, reminiscing and asking myself, "Aren't agencies like the F.B.I., C.I.A., I.R.S., N.S.A., etc., supposed to protect the people of this country with liberty and justice for all from foreign threats as well as domestic? Why then have the first terrorists, the K.K.K., been promoted to government officials and judges?" Then I remembered what the C.O. told me ..., "Fight the Power."

"In government, nothing happens by accident. If it happens, it was planned that way"

This is a collect call from ..., caller, please state you name."

"Diamond," I yelled through the wall mounted phone after dialing Dream's number.

"Will you accept the charges? Yes or no."

"Yes. Hello."

"Hello Dream. How are you? This is Diamond."

"Yes, I know. I heard you on the recording. Why are you in jail?"

"It's a long story. I'll explain it to you in a letter or something. I was just calling so you wouldn't think I just took your number and forgot all about you."

"Where are you Diamond? Are you on Riker's Island?"

"No, I'm in Virginia. I had to come down to pay some old bills, and well, you can figure out the rest."

"Dream, what's your address. I'll write to you and

explain what's going on."

"Do you have a pen?"

"Yes, I have one right here."

"Okay It's Dream Spears, 412 Park Place, Brooklyn, New York, 11211. What's yours?"

"Sedique Faison, P.O. Box 7056, Virginia Beach, Virginia, 23564."

"I'll write. Do you need anything?"

"No. I'm okay. I just wanted to touch bases with you. That's it. I'll speak with you later."

"Okay, bye Sedique. I hope you're okay and I hope I'll be seeing you soon."

"Me too. I'll hope you'll see me soon too."

Back on my bunk, all I could think of was Danita with my baby in her belly. Then thoughts of Bianca intruded. Why are they trying her if I go to trial? The only answer I could think of is what Mr. Donaldson told me. "She's a vice, they're just using her."

Out in the day room, guys played cards, chess, danced in front of the T.V., and talked about the women who were either in their life or used to be in their life but got snatched by "Jody" or "Sportcoat." Those were the two nicknames given to the man who was now fucking the hell out of your wife or girl while you're away in jail.

Since I had served almost a year in state custody, the gruesome tales of your girl getting fucked didn't faze me. I was a veteran now, plus, I had bigger things to do than to torment all of the younger guys who slept with photos of their women stuck to their beds with toothpaste.

Me, on the other hand, all I could do was think, "I

don't want to ruin Bianca's future, but shit, I have a future as well and a child on the way."

Later that night I went to the phone to call Danita.

"Danita?"

"Hi Diamonds. I've been waiting for you to call. Are you okay?"

"Yeah, I'm cool. This shit is so crazy though. My lawyer told me that Dre is willing to testify and they're going to charge Bianca if I go all the way."

"Dre? Your friend Dre that picked me up from the airport?"

"Yes, him! That fagot."

"What are you going to do Boo? I need you home, not in prison for the rest of your life."

"I know, I know. You're coming this weekend, right?"

"Yes, I'll be down on Friday. I have to see your lawyer, then I'll be right there. What time does visitation start?"

"Twelve p.m."

"Okay, I'll be there at twelve on the dot. We'll talk then."

"All right, good night Diamond. Try not to worry. I'll always be just a phone call away and here for you forever."

"Thanks Ma, I'll talk to you later."

That Friday when my lawyer came to visit me, Danita was with him dressed as a legal assistant instead of in the usual name brand tags that I was use to seeing her in.

"Sedique, they've seized your cars. Here's a copy of the notice of seizure. You'll also receive one in the mail. Listen, I'm going to be straight with you, they want you to cooperate. They know you were a college student and somebody had to supply you with all of those kilos. You're buddy Andre all ready told them about some guy named Happy."

"Okay, now let me get this straight with you. They can go to hell and if you come to me again with this proposal after I've given you twenty-five thousand dollars, you can escort them first class.

"Calm down Dique. Damn. He's just telling you what he's discovered."

"Mr. Donaldson, you may continue now."

"Okay. Here's what we have. Mr. Fene, the Federal prosecutor, has stated that if we decide to proceed with trial, and if you're convicted, at sentencing his recommendation will be a life sentence."

"A what?!"

"Also, if we go to trial and loose, your ex-girlfriend Bianca stands to get five to ten years in Federal prison as well."

"Mr. Donaldson, how the hell can they seek life for me when I wasn't caught with anything? No drugs, no money, nothing!"

"Mr. Faison, this chart right here," he said as he turned to the back of a burgundy book with the letters USSC on the front. "This chart has been constructed by the United States Sentencing Commission. Remember when I told you that you only have to worry about one point five kilos? Well, those one point five kilos put you, as I stated earlier, right here," he stated while point-

ing to a number thirty eight. "All of these other numbers you see are months of imprisonment. Now you're level thirty eight, plus two more points."

"Two points," I yelled. "Two more, for what?"

"Mr. Faison, according to their paperwork, one of the witnesses said he saw you with a gun a couple of years ago."

"Yeah, ... and?"

"And Andre said you had one."

"Yeah, ... and?" I asked repeatedly.

"Well, the United States Sentencing Commission allows a two point enhancement if a firearm is involved in your conspiracy."

"But they don't have a gun. I didn't get caught with a gun so that doesn't apply to me."

"Sedique, two people said they saw you with one years ago. That's all they need as a nexus to attribute you those two points which now puts you at a base offense level of 40 which is life."

"This shit is crazy. What the fuck is all of this United States Commission shit?"

"It's a panel that experiments on laws and guidelines and got Congress to support them so now it's the government law," Mr. Donaldson said as I flipped through his book.

"So, you're telling me that if I have one thousand kilos of powder, that I would get the same amount of time as having one hundred kilos of crack?"

"That's what the book says, right," he replied as I continued to read.

"So, if I hijacked an airplane, my base offense level wouldn't be as high as one and half keys of crack?

That's ridiculous!"

"Boo, don't take these people to trial," Danita said. "It's all rigged up."

As soon as she said that, I remembered what Happy said to me in the barber shop. Now I finally figured it out. "Shit," I said in a low frustrated tone.

"Mr. Faison, if we plead, they may be willing to take the gun enhancement off and give you three points for acceptance of responsibility which will put you at a base offense level of 35 which is 168 to 210 months and I could get you the 168."

"168 months for no drugs, no gun, no money, no nothing! Just a bunch of liars! How much time is that?"

"That's about fourteen years in which you will have to serve 85% which is almost twelve of those.

Danita broke out crying.

"Is this the best you can do?"

"Well, the time you served in your marked money case could be accredited, plus, you can subtract a year and a half if you participate in the Institutional Drug Rehab Program. So, when it's all said and done you could be home in about eight and half years."

"And what about Bianca?"

"She'll walk, I can try to get you to a Federal Prison Camp and you can spend hours playing with your baby. You'll be home by the time he goes to second grade."

I looked at Danita who was drying her eyes and beginning to smile. "It beats life Diamond. We'll be here for you and visit every month."

"Think about it Mr. Faison. Meanwhile, I'll prepare for trial. I'll visit you in a week or so and let you know where we are," Mr. Donaldson said as he got up to

leave the attorney panel.

"I love you. We love you Diamond," Danita said as she touched her belly turning to follow Mr. Donaldson.

"Mr. Faison, I forgot to tell you. Your buddy Andre is in government custody also. They're waiting for our next move before they decide what to do with him."

I looked back at my attorney and shook my head, "I'll see you next week."

Danita came to visit me the next day by her self. She smiled with a "I'll be here for you" smile that said, "don't be stupid," as I sat on the opposite side of the two inch thick visiting booth glass talking to her on a phone receiver.

"Look," she said, opening her legs so I could see her belly beginning to form.

I looked straight past her belly down to her pussy, hugging a pair of blue slacks.

"You're nasty boy."

"Yeah, I know," I smiled. "That's why I have you because you're even nastier."

"Yeah, but only for you Daddy. Only for you."

"Is that right?"

"Don't be stupid boy. You were the player, not me. Every time I saw you I just sat and let you do your thing because I knew when I got you, I was going to put it on you and do mine."

I cracked a smile. We chatted and I told her where to go and pick up some money to pay some bills and get herself situated for whatever my decision was going to be.

I hadn't thought it out yet, but I didn't want her to panic while she was with child. Especially mine.

The visit ended and I headed upstairs to my cell. "Is that your wife?" a C.O. asked.

"My wife? Yeah, that's my wifey."

"She looks like a good woman. I hope you make out okay with the Feds. I see so many inmates get hung. You look intelligent.

You don't need to be doing a life sentence," the female C.O. said as she walked in front of me to open my block.

"Thanks," I smiled while looking down to catch a glimpse of her panty line protruding through her uniform pants. Not exactly Bianca's or Ni'chelle's ass, but right now I'd make her feel like a virgin in love if she gave me the chance.

"Good luck."

"Thanks."

At mail call later that evening, my name was called. When I received my envelope that read "guess who" in the upper left corner, "Between you and me" card with a lipstick kiss and a nice smelling perfume scent was inside, I read the bottom and "stay strong, your friend Dream," was written in the lower right corner.

I smiled and put the card under my mattress. Afterwards, I got into a meticulous game of chess, which is considered the game of life because the moves can dictate a person's behavioral patterns in various situations.

My lawyer came to see me the following week. "Mr. Faison, what have you decided. If you're ready, I'm prepared for a trial, however, as I've told you, we will

see Andre in the court room."

"Mr. Donaldson, if I plead out, how much of my twenty five thousand do I get back?"

"Well, none Mr. Faison. I would have to represent you at your Rule 11 hearing as well as your sentencing."

"So, you're telling me I don't get any money back."

"Yes sir. That's what I'm telling you."

"Okay, then you better be ready for a rumble. Crank it up. Fuck Andre. We're going all the way."

"But what about your ex girlfriend Bianca?"

"Mr. Donaldson, as long as you win my case, she'll be just fine."

"But there's no guarantees," he said looking nervously at me.

"I understand that."

"Okay, if you wish Mr. Faison. Your trial date is set for exactly two weeks from today."

So ...Rich. Do you think he'll cop out or go all the way?"

"I don't know Mike, but I've got 'em by the balls. If he takes us to trial we'll use Andre against him and that should pen him, plus all I have to do is sign and execute a sworn affidavit and his ex-girlfriend gets indicted and goes down right along with him."

"Which one? The one that we stopped while driving his car home from that party or the one that you saw him with on the beach that fourth of July weekend?"

"Bianca, that's her name. And if I have to, she'll rot

right along with him. All they had to do was pay, but no. They wanted to play hard ball with us. The best two detectives in the streets. Now Mr. Diamond will be our grand promotion into the major league. Then we can bring in some big bucks," Detective Richard Broffman said to his partner Detective Mike Anderson as they both sat at the coffee table in Anderson's home.

"Well at least now I won't have to grit my teeth every time I see him pull up into his garage in that fancy car of his. Here I am busting my ass on the beat everyday and all he did was change women like underwear and throw big-shot parties."

"Yeah, and you gotta' see the inside of that place. He really had it laid out. Are you sure he didn't have a maid?"

"No, ... I never noticed a maid, only the girls. He hardly ever stayed there by himself."

"Oh well, it's too bad he won't see that place again."

"What about the cars?" Anderson asked.

"Yeah, we seized those - the Mazda and the Acura. I don't know, maybe we'll sell 'em and divide the money between the two of us."

"Listen Rich. I hope you know what you're doing. This case could be a big career move for the both of us. Are you sure that Andre is willing to testify if he has to?"

"Relax Mike. Everything's under control. Andre saw the picture and I had a few words with him so he'll pull through. Even if he doesn't want to, he'll pull through, believe me."

"What abut the other witnesses. Who are they?"

"Well, those are guys that have in fact seen Sedique

before."

"But Rich, some of the guys we have on that list have been locked away in prison for years. Where'd they see Diamond?"

"Well, if you must know, I showed them a copy of his picture and suggested that he use to distribute to them years ago in their old neighborhoods. Once I implanted a visual image into their memories and suggested their misattribution, they were all certain that they've not only seen Diamond, but also purchased directly from him before."

"Rich, you sly fox. You really are good."

"Hey, I'm a cop. We get paid to misattribute things as well as suggest others. When I'm under oath, I tell the truth about what I've suggested or what I believe. That's what makes the case. The facts are nothing. Now, just like the rest of the witnesses that we have, Andre's decision to testify is biased because we control his future. His confidence is not set in stone, it's set in what I've suggested to him. So, believe me, he won't let us down."

"Rich, where'd you learn all of this?" Detective Anderson asked.

"I guess you could call it the school of hunger pains. When I don't get the money I need to feed myself and my family, I go into the old D-BOT mode."

"D-BOT mode. What the hell is that?"

"D-B-O-T Mike. Dirty Bag Of Tricks. Everybody on the force has one. Okay, here's an example. You all ready know from training that at least one out of every six questions that we ask during interviews are in some way suggestive or leading, right?"

"Yeah, sure. I know that."

"Well Bud, in D-BOT mode, four out of every six questions are framed with suggestions and with that ratio, you're guaranteed to get an answer that you can use against your subject. Here's another. Consider this. You've got some broad in to view a line up. She's standing there looking through the glass going, 'Oh my God I don't know, maybe it's one of those two ..gosh, I don't know ... Oh shux, the guy that's a bit taller than number one ... It's one of those, but I don't know.' Thirty or forty minutes later she's still viewing and can't make a sound decision. 'I don't know... maybe number two?' At that point, all you have to say is 'okay' and at trial some months or so later, she'll swear on her children that it was number two. All you did was say a simple 'okay.' Now what's the jury going to believe. The facts or the 'okay' that you suggested?"

"Yeah Rich, you're right. I'll have to work on my D.B.O.T. mode a little more. After this case, I think I'm going to have to hang out with you more often. You know, if Sedique goes to trial, it's scheduled to start in a couple of days. I doubt if I'll be called by the government because you led this investigation. Are you ready?" Detective Anderson asked his partner Richard "Rich" Broffman.

"Am I ready?... D-BOT Mike. Remember that. D.B.O.T. Not only am I ready, my witnesses that will get called know enough about Sedique that you'd think they've known him from childhood, and for all but one of them, this will be their first time seeing him. If he goes to trial, the consequences are shattering. I get paid to make cases and they'll wish they paid us. Unfortunately for

Diamond, it's too late, and if he goes to trial, we'll bury him."

Detective Anderson looked at his partner who sat comfortably across from him sipping the last of his coffee while speaking so confidently. "I'm with you Rich. You just make sure that we don't loose."

"Shifty"

All rise for the grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan" is what I thought I'd heard as I sat next to my attorney in the District Federal Court room that resembled the halls of justice. Everyone in the court room stood to welcome the judge as he appeared from a door that was directly behind his bench.

The prosecutor as well as detectives Richard Broffman and Mike Anderson sat opposite us in neat and clean suits unlike the gear that they arrested me in.

"The United States of America versus Sedique Faison," the trial judge said. "Are there any pre-trial matters that we need to address?" the judge asked the assistant United States Attorney.

" No your Honor. The government is ready to proceed."

"Very well then. You may introduce your case and call your first witness," the judge stated.

One minute later, Dre walked out looking down at

the floor and sat on the witness stand. He looked at me sad faced and mouthed "why" in a silent voice. I sat there and began to shrink into my chair while staring at him with the same dead stare that Malachi gave me the night he was murdered. I turned and whispered something to my attorney.

"Your Honor, if you will, I would like to approach the bench with the government."

"Very well," the judge said as my lawyer and the prosecutor approached the bench.

When they walked forward, I looked over at the two detectives and gave them both the finger. The white detective, Richard Broffman smiled back at me and gave Dre the thumbs up.

When my attorney returned to his chair, the judge asked, "Mr. Faison, is it true that you wish to plead guilty to these charges?"

I stood up. "Yes your Honor, " I said, looking at Dre in disbelief with a smile on my face."

The judge dismissed Dre from the stand and began the required Rule 11 colloquy for a plea. Afterwards, my sentencing was scheduled for next Wednesday. Before I was taken into custody by the Marshals, my lawyer asked me, "Sedique, why'd you go through all the trouble of having me prepare for trial if you knew you were going to plead?"

"Two reasons. Number one, I'm not just giving nobody twenty-five thousand dollars, and number two, I wanted to see Andre's face."

"Are you content now?"

"As much as I can be, given my situation. Oh, and Mr. Donaldson, you're right, something is still fishy

about my case."

The Marshals handcuffed me and I winked at Danita. She wiped her tears and said, "Boy, you're crazy," before blowing me a kiss and saying "I love you," in silence.

On the stroll back to the bullpen with the Marshals, the slim younger looking guy looked at me. "Faison, that was your best bet. They have a bullpen full of witnesses upstairs, all waiting to come down and pronounce your fate. At least now you won't get a life sentence."

I grinned and looked back at the U.S. Marshal. "Sir, everyday that a person does in prison is life. I know for every cause there is an effect, but I also know that all of those witnesses upstairs were willing to come down and lie. I don't even know those guys."

Two days later, back in jail, my lawyer came to visit me. This time, the federal prosecutor was with him. "Sedique, the prosecutor says that if you're willing to cooperate, the government is willing to consider reducing whatever sentence you should receive."

"Mr. Donaldson, did you bring this man with you to visit me today?"

"No. No I didn't. When I pulled up, he was walking in all ready."

"Very well then Mr. Donaldson, isn't this the same individual you stated would seek a life sentence and also prosecute my ex-girlfriend if I even attempted to pursue a fair trial?"

"Yes, this is him. Assistant United States Attorney Mr. G. Finey."

"Mr. Finey, I've considered your offer, and I'd like to

ask you something. How can you sleep at night with a clear conscious knowing that you are railroading individuals daily. The United States of America is a country that was stolen from the natives and after that first crime, America's justice has been evil. And to cover up it's monopolized order, even the right to a fair trial is rigged. Mr. Donaldson," I continued, "Could you please ask this criminal to disappear. We're trying to do some legal work here."

The prosecutor looked at me, stood, and before exiting the visiting panel, handed my lawyer a business card.

"Sedique, have you called anyone lately? Your family, Danita? Anyone?"

"No, why?'

"Because they've all called me asking about you."

"I'm okay, I'm a stress ball, but I'll make it. I'll call them when I go upstairs. Now, let's get down to $25,000 worth of business."

"Hell, you really haven't called, have you?"

"No. I just told you that, why?"

"Because Danita would've told you that I gave her a check for five thousand dollars after you entered your plea."

"Oh, did you? So now you're only charging me twenty thousand to stand beside me. Gee, thanks Mr. Donaldson," I said as we both laughed.

"Okay, your sentencing is scheduled for next Wednesday at nine a.m.. We'll go in and I'll do the absolute best that I can do to get you the lowest sentence possible. Someone from the Probation Department will be coming down to visit you so that

they can prepare a pre-sentence investigation report. Once I receive a copy of it, I'll be back down to visit you to prepare for sentencing," my lawyer said while closing his briefcase. "That's it. I'll see you soon."

This is a collect call from ... caller, please state your name."

"Hi Daddy," Danita said, cutting the recording off before it could even finish. "How are you? You haven't called. We've been worried about you."

"I'm okay. How's my baby?"

"I'm okay. Thanks for asking."

"Good, that's nice to know, but I'm talking about the one in your belly."

"Oh, he's okay. We go for a checkup in thirty days from today. I'll send you a copy of the sonogram picture when I get it. Sedique, your lawyer gave me a five thousand dollar check. What do you want me do with it?"

"I need some new underclothes. Go down to Macy's and buy me six pair of white boxers, six white t-shirts, and six pair of sox."

"Why do I have to go to Macy'ss? I can go right to 125th Street and pick that up."

"No. Go to Macy's. I want all of it to be Polo. The sox, boxers, and t-shirts."

"What about the rest? What do you want me to do with the rest?"

"Danita, did you pick up the money I asked You to get?"

"Yes."

"How much is it?"

"I haven't counted all this stuff yet, but it should be what you said. Plus, Riza and Ruben set up a trust account with the money they had for you so the lawyer from that should be coming to see you soon."

"Okay, keep the five then. Open an account for yourself or go buy some baby things. Don't forget to send my under clothes though."

"Why does it have to be Polo? Can't you just wear some Haynes or something?"

"Danita, just do what I ask you to do for me, okay?"

"I'm sorry Boo. I'll mail it out for you tomorrow. I'll speak to you later."

"Okay. Soul Train is coming on. I gotta' go."

"You what?!"

"I gotta' go watch Soul Train."

"Why? Do you like one of them nasty women on T.V. shaking their stank assess?"

"Danita, what's your problem? I'm in jail and you're acting like I'm fucking the T.V. I'll call you later. Get some rest. I love you."

I hung up from Danita and called Dream.

"Hello."

"Hi Diamond. Did you receive my card?"

"Yeah, I got it the other day. Thank you. What fragrance was that?"

"I rubbed it around my panties so that's what you smelled. I figured you're not getting any, so you could use a little pussy."

My dick slid down to my knee. "Dream?"

"Yes Diamond?"

"You are crazy."

"Why? Because I wanted to send you something that I couldn't wait to give you."

"Oh really?"

"Yes. You saw the kisses on the card. Hopefully soon you'll be able to fill those lips too. Did you get the pictures I sent?"

"What pictures? No. I haven't received any pictures."

"You should have them soon then. Brace yourself."

"Okay, thanks Dream. When I get out, I'll make it up to you."

"When are you getting out Diamond?"

"I don't know yet. I have court next Wednesday, so I'll call you one day next week."

"Okay, take care and stay strong Diamond. You'll be all right."

I hung up the phone smiling after talking to Dream, then went to take a shower for the night.

"Yo Diamond!" Brian, another inmate yelled. "You want to hold Shorty while you're in there?" he asked, showing me a picture of some girl bent over in a thong on her hands and knees.

"Nah, thanks kid. I'm cool. I haven't been in that long. I'm not slamming my joint yet."

"Okay, suit yourself."

I went to lift my mattress to grab a pair of clean boxers and the aroma from Dream's card filled my nose. As I showered and washed myself, I thought about my life, my case, Bianca, Melanie, Ni'chelle, Danita, and Dream's scent. As my pipe began to take it's own shower, I thought of how Dream looked the night I gave her a ride to the cab stand and how she

put her ass up in my face as she got out of my car, exposing her yellow thong through her white pants. Before I knew it, I was massaging my lowings and then jerking the life out of me thinking about Dantia.

"Legal Plunder -AKA- Government Stealing"

At my sentencing hearing, the prosecution and its table were filled with the usual suspects flipping through all kinds of paper work. My lawyer and I sat opposite of them, looking at them periodically trying to see what all the paperwork was about.

The Court bailiff did her usual announcement introducing the judge and then my sentencing proceeded.

The prosecutor stated the guidelines required for my sentence according to the United States Sentencing Commission. He went on to tell the judge about the amount of drugs I was attributed in my case.

"Your Honor, this young man controlled a drug organization. His former college roommate from a few years ago would've also been indicted, but he was gunned down and brutally murdered over a drug deal."

He went on to say how his special agent, Detective

Richard "Rich" Broffman has investigated these types of cases for years and even he himself was rather amused with how meticulous I moved. "Mr. Faison did not only have dealings in the Eastern District of Virginia, but he sent cocaine to Washington, D.C., North Carolina, and even South Carolina," he profoundly stated.

"He's lying. I've never even been to South Carolina."

"Sedique," my lawyer whispered, "he's attempting to dress up your sentence based on the lies that witnesses told him."

"Your Honor," the prosecutor continued, "The Government recommends the highest end of the guidelines for Mr. Faison, which is 365 months due to his prior offense and weapons enhancements."

"What?!"

"Calm down Sedique," my lawyer said.

"I thought you said I wouldn't get enhanced for a gun that no one has? And what is this prior offense bullshit?"

My lawyer stood and said a whole bunch of shit about how I was a college student who planned on going back to school, how my fiancé, who is back in New York, is pregnant and how we planned to be married in a reasonable time as well as a lot of other ass kissing shit on my behalf before he concluded by stating that I would like to preserve my right to challenge my enhancement.

When it was all said and done, Judge Evil took off his invisible headphone set, woke up and said, "Mr. Faison, please stand before my courtroom," in his Dixie Land hillbilly accent. "Mr. Faison, or Diamonds, or whatever else you call yourself. I hope the dear

Lord saves and spares your soul because the United States Government will not. I hereby sentence you to three hundred and sixty five months in the custody of the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Furthermore, you will remain on supervised release for five years after your release. Bailiff, get this criminal out of my courtroom."

"365 months! 30 years! Sedique, I'll file your appeal in one week," my lawyer said while shaking his head.

I looked at him in disbelief, turned my head and walked from the courtroom. One I reached the door to exit the court room, I stopped to turn around and look at the table representing the United States of America. When I made eye contact with Richard Broffman, he looked at me, shook his head and gave me the finger.

When I got back to jail, the Chaplain came and pulled me from my cell. "Mr. Faison, I have some disheartening news for you that I must pass on. Your fiancé Danita's mother called. She's in intensive care. She lost the baby but she'll be all right in a couple of days. She didn't say much, only something about some complications and to tell you to call as soon as possible."

I walked back to my cell, laid my face down on my bunk and shed tears until I fell asleep.

"Yo Diamond," Brian, my cellmate said, touching my foot and shaking it. "Are you all right kid? I heard about your sentence and the Chaplain came looking for you earlier. Your families all right?"

"Yeah, yeah. Thanks Bri. My girl is in I.C.U., some-

thing happened. She lost the baby. This is too much man, you know. I stopped hustling! I didn't get caught with anything!"

"Yeah, I know kid," Brian said. "You'll be okay. You gotta keep fighting when you get in the system. I'll let you rest. If you need to talk, just holla' at me. I'm right here."

The next morning, just as I was about to call Danita's mother's house, I was called down for an attorney visit. My lawyer was sitting there holding his glasses in one hand and his head in the other when I walked in.

"Sedique, your case is one of the fishiest cases I've ever seen. I couldn't bluff them and let you get life, but I had no idea they would try to slam you."

"Yeah. Thirty years, life, what's the difference?"

He didn't say anything. "Sedique, I'm going to handle all of your appeals and we'll start with the weapons and prior offenses enhancement."

"Okay, is that it? I'm tired and Danita lost the baby. I have to use the phone and get some rest. I'll call you later."

"Sedique, I ..., never mind," he said, grabbing his belongings. "You'll hear from me shortly. If they transfer you before then, be sure to call me and let me know your address."

"How long will it take for them to get me into transit?" I asked.

"I'm not sure, maybe two or three weeks."

When the visit was over, I went back up to my cell block and called Danita's mother.

"Hello."

"Hi Diamond. How are you?" her mother asked.

"I'm a live, thanks for asking. Where's Danita? Is she okay? The Chaplain came and gave me the news yesterday."

"Yes, she's okay. As a matter of fact, she's right here. They released her this morning. Danita!" she yelled. "Diamond is on the phone. Pick it up in my room."

Danita answered the phone still crying. "I'm sorry Boo, I'm sorry."

"Danita, calm down. It's not your fault." I said, catching the tear that fell from my eye.

"Sedique, I love you."

"I know you do Danita. Just get some rest. I just wanted to check on you."

"How did you make out in court?"

"Listen, get some rest. I'll call you and talk to you tomorrow night or something. It's going to be okay." I lied as I began to cry silently. "Get some rest. I'll speak to you tomorrow."

Later that night at mail call, my name was called twice. One letter from Danita with a picture of the sonogram, and one letter that was postmarked a week ago was from Dream containing pictures of her in panty and bra sets in different poses. I had a fresh thirty year sentence and just lost my child, yet still, looking at Dream sitting there with her legs open made my dick as hard as a roll of quarters.

Weeks went by and not only was I still waiting to go into the Federal System, but Mr. Donaldson, my lawyer, had not come to

visit me. Danita came down to visit right after she was cleared to return to work by her doctor. Although our baby was gone, she still called me Daddy and vowed that when this was all over we would have more kids. I never told anyone exactly what my sentence was. As far as I was concerned, it wasn't my sentence anyway. It's their sentence and I'm fighting to shove it right back down their throat. If making a place in society means taking responsibility and accountability for strengthening your position, wherever you come from or might be, then I was determined to make my place. Something was definitely fishy about my case and I was determined to catch the big fish.

Later that night, after playing a few games of chess, I hit my bunk and turned in for the night.

"Mr. Faison, B and B," a voice said as I cracked my eyes to see a correctional office standing at the foot of my bunk. "It's three thirty, I'll be back to pop your cell at four. You have a half hour to pack."

B and B meant bag and bag, which meant an inmate was leaving the jail. When the C.O. said "B and B" to me, you would've thought he said it to the entire house (cell block). Everybody got up and gave me pounds while seeing exactly what I was going to leave behind.

My cellmate, Brian, wrote down his address. "Yo kid, stay in touch."

"No problem Bri. I'll write to you as soon as I get to where I'm going."

When the officer returned, all I had was my legal work, cards, letters and pictures. I left everything to the block, all the way down to my Polo underwear. The C.O. talked

me to death until we reached the first floor. "Black man keep fighting," he said. "The only way to destroy our race is to destroy us."

I looked at him and smiled. "You'll see me again," I said, "In better times."

"Where are you going?"

"I don't even know myself."

When we reached the first floor, two police officers were there waiting for me. "Where am I going?" I asked. "You aren't the Marshals."

"No, Mr. Faison, someone wants to talk to you down at our jail."

Twenty minutes and thirty five miles later, Detectives Broffman and Anderson sat at another county jail awaiting my arrival.

"Sedique Faison, you're being charged with murder in the first degree," Detective Broffman said while smiling and handing me the written charges.

"What? What the fuck are you talking about?"

They read me my rights and then shut the cell door, giving me the finger from the other side of the glass. I yelled, screamed, and snatched the phone out of the wall.

At eight a.m. sharp, I called my lawyer. "Mr. Donaldson."

"Wait Sedique," cutting me off, "I all ready have the morning paper and it's front page news."

Obviously, in an attempt to inflate his own ego, Detective Broffman took a nice picture holding an umbrella, and hand walked it over to the media along with his rigged-up allegation.

"Mr. Faison, I'll be down to visit you at 10:00 a.m."

"10:00 a.m.! Why so late?"

"Sedique, I'll be there as soon as I finish my coffee."

That morning, everybody was looking at me with a strange face. If this wasn't a set up, then there was no such thing. I prayed to God not to go crazy and to maintain whatever level of strength that I had left. I picked up the phone and called my aunt. She had all ready heard the news because one of her girlfriends saw the morning news then called her after seeing the picture.

"Are you that guy named Diamonds?" A guy in the cell block asked.

"Yeah, why?"

"Yeah, you gotta' murder case, right?"

All I could do was lay down. Before ten a.m., this detective and my old neighborhood police officer had contacted every media outlet in the area, and even some outside of the area. He must be running for sheriff or something is all I could think of. This guy goes from jump out squad to agent, to detective. Now I see why. I wonder how many other cases he's rigged up and railroaded.

My lawyer pulled me for an attorney visit before I was even processed and moved on to the floors.

"Sedique, I don't know what this is or where it came from," he stated.

"Well, that makes two of us, but I do know one thing, Broffman is the culprit behind this plot."

"I'll look into these charges and see what we can come up with. My friend's firm has a good lawyer that I want you to talk to. She works in this area and if you give me the word, I'll send her down to talk to you."

"Okay, no problem Mr. Donaldson," I stated, "One

time and one time only, the words 'plead guilty' no longer exist in our vocabulary. I pled in Federal Court because I knew what it was and yes, I did involve myself in drug distribution. But this shit, it's not me. If the alleged deceased were to walk in here and sit beside me right now, I wouldn't know who the hell he was."

Not a problem, Sedique. We'll get to the bottom of this."

After I was processed and put up on the floors, I called Danita.

"Danita. How are you?"

"I'm okay Boo. Can you call me back though, I need to finish my nails."

"Okay, I'll call you back tonight. You're not going to believe what I have to tell you."

"What?" she asked inquisitively.

"You remember that detective, right?"

"Yeah."

"Well, he moved me to another jail in another city, 20 to 30 minutes away and charged me with somebody's murder."

"What?!" she yelled. "Murder? Who?"

"Danita, I do not know. I'll call you tonight though. They just called me back down for an attorney visit."

When I entered the open attorney panel, a middle age white lady was sitting there with long pretty hair and a business suit on with legs that seemed unreal flowing beneath it.

"Hi Mr. Faison. I'm your attorney's friend. May I call you Sedique?"

"Call me a doctor because if I can't get between

those sexy legs, I'm going to die, " is what I wanted to say but instead settled for, "Yes, Sedique is fine."

"Okay Sedique, my name is 'please ram your cock in my hot cunt,'" is what I wanted to hear. Instead she said, "My name is Cindy. I've taken the liberty to look into these allegations and I can not find anything with your name on it. I will continue to investigate if you desire and my retainer fee is ten thousand dollars."

"Sure, not a problem," I stated while accidentally looking at her legs.

Our visit ended and I watched her walk away so I could catch a glimpse of her ass. "Not exactly a sista's," I said to myself, "but for a middle aged white chick, I would give 10 gees to fuck the Mayflower out of her."

She caught me staring so I waved to play it off.

Sportcoat

Do you mind if I come up for a little while, it's cold out here. I know you don't expect me to just stand out in front of your building and freeze to death, do you?"

"No, no. I'm sorry. Of course not. Sure, you can come up, but only for a minute or so, I'm going to bed soon. I have to get up for work in the morning you know, " Danita said as she stuck her key in the building door to open it after returning from the movies with Derrick.

"Have a seat," she said as they entered the apartment. "I have to-use the bathroom. I'll be out in a minute."

"Okay. Take your time. Did you enjoy the movie?"

"Yeah, it was all right. I could've waited for it to come on video, but since you invited me, I wasn't about to turn it down," Danita said as she entered the bathroom, closing the door behind her. "You can turn the T.V. on. The remote is on top of the stereo," she yelled.

When she returned from the bathroom, she joined

Derrick on the couch.

"Gosh, I'm exhausted," she said as she removed her shoes and placed them against the wall. "I hope you don't think I'm rude, I'm just tired and I do have to work in the morning."

"No. I understand. I'm not going to stay long," Derrick said as he sat back comfortably, placing his arm around Danita. "I have some trees. Do you smoke?"

"Shit. I shouldn't at this time of night, but yeah, go ahead, spark up."

"This is a nice place ... who's the guy in the pictures on top of the T.V. and by the door?" Derrick asked as he pulled on the freshly rolled blunt and passed it to Danita.

"That's my boyfriend. He's locked up," she replied as she took the blunt.

"This show is boring. Turn on the stereo. What CD's do you have?"

"Ooohh, my favorite CD is all ready in. Mary-J. Blidge.

Here. Give me the remote," Danita said as she reached into Derrick to receive the remote.

When she reached across him, he kissed her while hugging her around her waist.

"I can't do this," she replied while still in his arms, looking up at him. "I have a man."

He looked at her and kissed her again, now beginning to rub up and down her side under the sweater that she wore with her wool skirt.

Her breathing began to get heavier as she panted. "Oh God ..I can't do this, "she said as he began to suck on her neck while running his hand under her skirt.

Danita unconsciously opened her legs while enjoy-

ing the sensation that she hadn't felt in some time now as Derrick continued to suck on her neck and kiss her while sliding his finger into her tightness that was dripping wet.

"Oooo, shit. You feel so good," she said as she began to enjoy the arousal and rubbing his mid section. Derrick unzipped his pants while puling Danita tightly into him and still arousing her.

"Ooohhh, I shouldn't be doing this," she sighed as she now held his erection.

Derrick ran his finger through her hair as he nibbled on her ear and then positioned her over his lap with her skirt now hiked up over her waist.

She continued to moan, "God, I'm so wet. I can't do this," as she lowered herself onto his erection now receiving the strokes that he produced from beneath. "Ooohhh, don't come inside me," she cried as she enjoyed the ride.

Tears welled up in Danita's eyes as she realized what she was doing but couldn't control the urgency of the sensation she felt as he continued to penetrate her from beneath.

"Tell me when you're coming, okay?" she cried as she now leaned into him with tear filled eyes, enjoying the guilt felt situation oh-to-well.

"UUUUUHHHHH."

"You came in me?! No! No! Get out!" she said as she raised up off of him. "Oh, what did I do." She cried while running to the bathroom. "I told you not to come in me. God, what have I done. Please leave. Just leave," she cried, realizing that no matter how much she washed or jumped up or down, she just had unprotected sex and

the consequences could be life altering.

Derrick left her apartment and she closed the door behind him crying as she stopped and stared at the picture that hung right at her front door.

Weeks turned into months and the case was finally dismissed. Broffman practically begged for more time so he could continue laying his railroad tracks, but the judge threw the case out. No media cameras came my way. No newspapers, no radio stations. No nothing. I had learned a powerful and valuable lesson in media monopoly. Most of what we watch is only half the story and most of the time, even that half is tainted. How could one man monopolize the media to make himself appear so fair and powerful? How could there be justice when the influence is just them? Justice and "just-us" may sound the same, but the differences have proven to be life threatening.

Later that night I called Danita. "What's up?"

"Nothing. I'm just tired."

"Do you want me to call you back?"

"You can if you want to."

"What's wrong with you? You don't want to talk or something?"

"Sedique, please, not now, I'm laying down."

"Danita, something is wrong. Talk to me. Once I get into the Federal System, you can come visit me and we can sort a lot of things out."

"Sedique, it's nothing you can help me with. I'm just taking some time to myself, that's all."

I stared at the phone receiver and thought for a brief moment. "Danita. You're pregnant, aren't you?"

She broke into tears on the phone and started trying to explain.

"You slut!" I yelled and hung up the receiver.

That night in my bunk, I tossed and turned and thought about my life and how I first met her at Puffy's party. About her wrapped in the ribbon. About her coming to visit me while she was on her period and about Bianca. What is she doing? I grabbed a pen and began to write out my thoughts and ... feelings.

> *"Life is ... frustration and a fairy tale, both waiting to happen ... to live is experiences... you'd never imagine. Joy is the reality of a proud emotion... while sadness is the consistency of unrealistic devotion. It hurts. Pain is transparent, in lessons, even the smartest of students can't comprehend or contest this. It causes you to live while confusing you about life. It's the force of unknown weight that demands unconscious exercise. Strength is reversed pressure applied from within one. The object is the fairy tale. Now your experience has begun. Perseverance is your brother, be he friend or foe. Consistency is your sister for which it's nothing you wouldn't undergo. Your mother is your conscious who rubs you through the frustrations of life. Your father is your subconscious that forewarns you about the fairy tale of unknown strife. Now you are complete. From Genesis to*

Exodus, the only frustration about the equation is trying to master who's who in us."

I put my pen and pad down, rolled over on my back and dozed off to sleep.

"I Gotta' Make It To Heaven, But I'm Going Through Hell."

Faison, B and B. The Marshals are here to pick you up," a female voice yelled over the inter com system at three in the morning.

Why I felt so happy to hear the word "Marshals," I did not know, but after being cooped up inside of two different county jails for well over a year now, I was finally going into transit.

Once I was downstairs, shackled and handcuffed with another chain belt around my waist connecting the two, I climbed up into a van and two more guys were all ready inside. We all looked at each other in silence and then leaned our heads against the window as the van pulled off, watching distance separate us from an area we knew oh-to-well. As we continued onto the highway with familiar sites and trees passing us, the realization that I was heading to prison set in like a rock. "They're taking me totally away from a reality that I know ... into a system that I don't," I said to myself as distance continued to reign.

As the van continued to conquer the now foreign highway miles, I laid with my head up against the window and dozed off while thinking about everything and how Dre assisted in ruining it. Once the van stopped, I awoke and looked out of the window and saw rows and rows of buses with prisoners shackled and chained in single file lines monitored by U.S. Marshals carrying machine guns. Each row of inmates began boarding and waiting to board buses and airplanes as they pulled in. I noticed how all of the women were kept totally separate from the men, but the men bent, turned around and leaned just to get a glimpse of their asses.

At that moment I felt comfortable knowing that although we were no longer together, Bianca didn't get caught up in this situation that I still didn't fully understand. Looking over at all of the women that were locked up, I'd noticed that there were more black women shackled and handcuffed to each other than there were white men. I thought about Melanie for a brief moment and then Danita. Pregnant. I couldn't believe it and I vowed never to speak to her again.

As I stood in my shackled row waiting to board my bus, Malachi's daughter Ashley was stuck in my mind. I wanted to check on her and Terry as soon as I got myself situated. As I stood there in the freezing cold weather remembering Detective Richard "Rich" Broffman's face while giving me the finger, it made me so upset that the temperature didn't even bother me. I made a sound conclusion and vowed to myself from this day forward that I was going to get Rich or die trying.

Two bus rides and two days later, I finally reached my assigned designation. Once we were taken into the double layered barb-wired prison gates and directed into a building called "R and D" (Receiving and Discharge), I was immediately processed. "Fill this out." "Sign that." "Fill this out." "Smile for the Camera," is all I heard said by each correctional officer, way to routinely. Identification cards were issued with our picture on it and "United States Department of Justice" in white letters spelled out across the top. I looked at the I.D. card with my photo and regional number beside it and laughed to myself. "This sure isn't the fake I.D. that Malachi said he could get me years ago," I said to myself.

In another part of the building we were each given two blankets, two pillow cases, two sheets, two towels, two washcloths, one pillow and then directed out of the door and escorted to our new housing unit.

"What the fuck is this?" I said to myself. I would've much rather been broke and back in my dormitory room than to have money and live amongst this shit.

Me and a guy named Khadafi from Atlantic City, New Jersey met in transit back in Virginia and since we were close to his home, he knew a lot of guys on the compound all ready. His assigned room was two doors down from mine so we hung out and went to breakfast in the chow hall together. The chow hall is the institutional lingua for dining hall or cafeteria.

The next day, I was scheduled to attend a "Unit A & O" class (Admissions and Orientation). Khadafi and I attended the class and were introduced to the Unit Staff

and told that this was just a brief introduction. "We'll have a complete institution A & O class next week."

Our Unit Staff consisted of two counselors, Mr. Williamson and Mr. Cozzaly, one white and one black, and both ex-military nuts turned counselors. We also had two case managers, Ms. Adams, a slim white lady with a very cordial and professional attitude, and Mr. Andrews who barely spoke a word and pretended to be in such deep thought all the time. He reminded me of a con-artist crackhead; always thinking about nothing.

The last person to introduce herself to us was the Unit Team Manager. She simply introduced herself to us as Ms. "C." The entire class was glued to her ass. The shortest of them all, she was a younger white lady who appeared to be no older than thirty one with an ass that was so big and perfectly round that every black man in the class got instantly homesick. When she walked, she reminded me of Melanie the first time I saw her walking towards the student union building. She was bowlegged in her right leg and every step she took it looked like her leg was begging to be pent up around your shoulder. Ms. C made the last speech and then dismissed the class. As she gathered her paperwork at the podium. All of us sat and waited for her to exit the room first so that we could catch another glimpse of her gift that was trying its best to remain tucked away under the long shirt that she wore but kept protruding through with each step that she took. If this woman didn't have any black in her, then she definitely needed some and I was willing to volunteer my services free of charge.

After class, Khadafi and I walked around to explore the institution compound, checking out all the prison

imagery that's sometime wrongfully portrayed on T.V. - Prisoner's playing basketball, lifting weights, walking, smoking cigarettes, jogging, you name it and unlike what I'd expected. The visual was like a college campus except of course for the razor wire fences, minimal women, and cleanliness.

On the way back to the housing unit we lived in, I stopped to get a glimpse of the library. Not to many inmates were there. There were some, but not as many as were glued in front of the T.V. watching BET when I arrived at the T.V. room back in my building.

"Yo Khadafi, I'm going up to my room. Are you going to breakfast in the morning?" I asked.

"Yeah. You want me to wake you up when I get up?"

"Yeah, please. Thanks."

"Cool. Not a problem Diamond. I'm about to crash for the rest of the day myself. I just want to check out the mail call and see how it operates. After that, I'm out too."

"Oh shit. Yeah. Come on. I'm going too."

Mail call had just started when we walked in - One correctional officer surrounded by more than a hundred inmates calling out names and numbers.

"Sedique Faison," I heard my name called, followed by my inmate number.

"Yeah, that's me. Pass it," I said, surprised to be receiving mail on my second day in prison.

The C.O. passed my letter through numerous hands until it finally reached mine. When I read the return address it read "Guess Who?" in the upper left corner. On the back of the all ready opened but stapled envelope in red ink, "Dream" was spelled in a beautiful cursive handwriting. I took the letter back

to my room, climbed up onto my top bunk, got comfortable, and began to totally zone out as I read

Diamond,

Surprise! I know you're wondering how I knew where you were all ready. Well, ... I'll tell you when you call me. I'm looking forward to coming to visit you so please send me any paperwork that I may need to fill out so I can get in. I hope you enjoyed the last set of pictures that I sent you back at that jail in Virginia. You have more on the way.

Anyway, this is just a short one. I wanted to surprise you. Can't wait to hear from you. Write back and hope to see you soon.

Dream

I laid back in my bed smiling.

The next day I needed to send out a few visiting forms as well as turn in a phone list to have my numbers activated.

"Diamond. Diamond," Khadafi whispered as he tapped my foot to wake me. "It's ten after six. You're going to breakfast, right?"

"Na, ...na. Thanks kid. Go ahead without me. I'm tired. I'll get with you a little later."

Later that evening I walked down to the law library and started to familiarize myself with numerous law books. The more I read, the more I realized and confirmed that something was definitely fishy about my case and Richard Broffman was the fish that I needed to catch.

According to a case I read cited under E. vs. United States of America, if there was any powder cocaine involved in my case, then I should've been sentenced to the lesser charge, which is powder. Detective Richard Broffman stated that I was the one that supplied Jeff with the cocaine that he got busted with in the sting operation with Stank. However, they totally disregarded any overt acts about the commercial powder cocaine and sentenced me solely on the black crack ratio death trap. After doing continuous research in the law library, I now labeled my pen as my weapon of choice which becomes a whip in the hands of this craftmaster who was out to get Rich or die trying. I knew my case was fixed and I was determined to give them a taste of their own medicine.

After returning all of the borrowed books to the library clerk, I walked back up to my housing unit just in time for mail call and then headed up to my room with two letters that came for me.

Diamond,

I know we haven't spoken in a while and I really would like to hear from you. I was looking through some old memoirs and I can't find the picture that you, Malachi and Dre took at your first party back in the day after the N.S.U. football game. Remember that night? (smile) That was my favorite picture. Anyway, call me. I miss you.

Love,
Melanie

Sedique,

I will never give up on us. I know I made a mistake. But mistakes happen. Call me so we can talk.

Forever yours,

Danita

I immediately ripped up Danita's letter and then went to the phone to call Dream.

"This call is from a Federal Prison ... This is a prepaid call ..You will not be charged for this call ... This call is from "Diamond," I yelled.

"Press 5 to accept the call or 7-7 to block future prepaid calls from this person."

"Diamond! Hi!" Dream said excitedly, "How are you?,,

"I'm okay. Did you receive the visiting form that I sent to you?"

Yes, I all ready filled it out so when I'm on your list, let me know and I'll be right there. Did you receive my pictures?"

"Yeah, I got them."

"Where are they?" she asked demandingly.

"In my locker, on my mirror."

"Can you have sex on the visits? I mean, I know you're in the Feds and all."

"Nah, unfortunately not, Dream. I wish we could."

"Damn. The state can have sex and the Feds can't ... what kind of shit is that?"

"Yeah, I know."

"Maybe I'll wear a short skirt or some loose sweat pants or something. I might even get your dick wet for you. I know you need it."

I laughed. "Yeah, you're right about that. Listen

Dream, I'll call you as soon as you're on my list, okay? I'm about to watch T.V. for a while, plus, this about to hang up."

"Okay, take care Diamond. I'll be there as soon as I am cleared."

Days went by and I still hadn't called Bianca. At mail call I received a letter from Terry, Malachi's ex-fiancé.

Sedique,

How are you? I pray that all is well and you're holding on. Guess what? Your friend or ex-friend Dre wrote me. He asked me why didn't you tell him that they had broke into your house when you were gone and Melanie was out. He said that Detective Broffman showed him pictures of all of you together at your first party and told him that you gave it to him, trying to set Dre up. He also said that Detective Broffman personally selected witnesses who were all ready locked up to come testify against you. Andre said that Detective Broffman put an APB out on your car at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel so when they saw it come through, they called him. That's how he knew you were back. Anyway, that's it for now. You better call Bianca boy! I heard your girl got pregnant on you. Diamond, you should've known she was a freak when all she did was sit in the corners, watching you at your parties, knowing your girl was right there.

Stay strong. Call Bianca.

Take care,
Terry

It was all coming together now. Detective Richard Broffman was in fact the fish in my fishy case.

A week later, my attorney wrote me and told me that he had recently filed my direct appeal in Appellate Court and that he felt good about the issues that he raised.

If all went well, he would get me down to fifteen years.

That was good news. Although not quite good enough. I was determined to go after Broffman for all of his tricks and media stunts that landed me in this situation. If what Dre was telling Terry was in fact true, then my chances grew that much more.

1993
"It's Unbelievable..."

Inmate Sedique Faison number 1189311-083, report to the visiting room, your visitor is waiting," is what was yelled over the institution's intercom speaker system.

When I entered the visiting room, Dream was wearing a loose fitting long royal blue one piece dress. Her hair was done in a perfect wrap and the Chanel perfume that she wore surrounded me in a rich delicate embrace. Immediately upon seeing her I hugged her and pecked her on her lips before we took seats beside each other in the row of visiting chairs throughout the inmate visiting hall.

"Damn, it's been quite some time now Dream. You really look beautiful in that dress! I wish I could get under it."

"I wish you could too Diamond," she said as she sat up and readjusted her legs. "Guess what? I don't have anything on under it either," she whispered while showing me the pockets on the sides of her dress.

"You know Dream. It was something about you when I first met you that really set in well with me. I know I only gave you a ride to the cab stand, but I felt like I needed to call you to tell you about my situation and now look at you. You're here visiting me and driving me crazy with your beauty."

"Well Diamond. Do you want me to leave?"

"Leave? Hell no! Of course not, " I replied as we both sat and continued in our conversation.

I slid my hand into her cut out pocket and started to rub her thigh on the visit.

"Boy, your hands are cold, " she said while looking at me and smiling. "You're going to get us in trouble," she said noticing the bulge inside of my tan khaki pants. I repositioned myself unnoticingly and then casually inserted my middle finger into Dream. She leaned over onto my shoulder and talked to me as she stuck her hand down my pants and started to jerk me without anyone noticing.

"Wow. You are excited," she said while feeling my erection as she continued to jerk me off.

As Dream focused on releasing me, the girl that sat directly in front of me stared directly into my fainted eyes and then opened her legs wide open while continuing in her conversation with her friend. I looked down at the fat print between her legs and released right into Dream's hand. She grabbed a bunch of napkins and pecked me on my cheek. "There. That should hold you until my next visit," she said before walking to the ladies room.

"Do you feel better now?" she asked when she returned to her seat.

I sat there in a trance trying to re-gather myself. "Yeah, I'm cool." we both laughed.

We continued to chat as well as coordinate our next visit and when the visit was over we hugged, kissed and said our good byes.

"Call me."

"I will, not a problem. Thanks Dream," I added just as the girl sitting directly in front of us was leaving.

"You're not going to thank me Mr. Diamond ?" she asked in a whispering tone. "My brother will talk to you later."

I looked at her and then looked again before turning to leave.

"Yo. Is your name Diamond?" A guy in the line with me waiting to be strip searched asked.

"Yeah, why?" I asked.

"My sister wants to meet you. She said she use to attend a lot of your parties and your face looked familiar."

"Ohh. Okay. No problem."

He gave me her name and address and we went our separate ways.

When I arrived back at my housing unit, Khadafi told me that I received a letter in the mail and that he put it under my pillow. I headed up to my room opened it and began to read:

Diamond,

How are you? Just wanted you to know that I had a six pound, eight ounce baby boy. I would like to visit you. Please write me back.

Take care. Love always,

Danita

After reading Danita's letter, I ripped it up and laid back in my bunk on this Friday night listening to New York's Blazin Hip Hop and R & B radio station, Hot 97 FM, through my headphone set. "This is DJ Jazzy Joyce on ladies night on Hot 97," the radio personality said in a voice that was way too sexy for radio. If Jazzy Joyce knew what kind of sexy voice she had and how it effected men, she could easily make millions with a 1-900 phone sex line. I probably would've given her five hundred thousand myself just to hear her whine in my ear. As I continued to listen, I laid back, "reJoyced," but still frustrated.

A lot of those nights came in the years that I would spend in federal custody and in an effort to maintain my own sanity amongst the de-humanizing experience of being imprisoned in the belly of the United States Government, I began to discover gifts, appreciations, and talents that I never even knew I had.

As the weeks turned into months, and months turned into years, my attorney had proven himself correct. I won two of the four arguments that were noted in my appeal and I was resentenced to 168 months - fourteen years and change which was better than my original sentence but still too fucking long. I had almost four years in which meant that I would have to serve at least eight more years to complete the required eighty five percent of my new sentence before

being released. Eight years is a lot better than thirty, but to me it still felt like a lifetime.

Bianca visited me a couple of times and we talked on the phone every so often. Dream continued to surprise me with letters weekly and visits at least once a month. Ni'chelle had proven to be a true-to-the-game friend. She checked on my Aunt Freckles and kept me informed about what was going on in New York even when I didn't want to know. She even sent pictures of herself holding one red rose in her shower with water dripping from her still shapely body. I eventually ended up calling Danita and we talked on numerous occasions. One time I heard her son in the background and although I didn't harbor any bitter feelings towards the child, I didn't recognize her in that realm and the element of surprise soured my entire conversation. She insisted on visiting me in prison but I saw no point in that. To me she was now the mother of someone else's child and I didn't want to intervene in that picture because I wouldn't want anyone to intervene in mine had she had our baby. For that reason, I simply chose to communicate in brief spurts. Her actions and her choices were her own doings. Although they affected me emotionally, they proved to assist me in my many lessons about life. We can never change our past, but we have the rest of our lives to change our future.

"Four o'clock. Stand-up count!" A female correctional officer's voice yelled.

Four o'clock was the time that every inmate in the federal prison system stood up to be counted. When the C.O. came into my room, I watched her as she walked in and out counting each of us. The way she wore her

panties, letting them invade the crevice of her nicely shaped ass, reminded me of Bianca in her sun dress years ago. When she exited the room, she turned around and caught me looking in a dead stare at her ass. Thinking that I would get some sort of bullshit wreckless eyeballing citation, I cut my stare. She continued to look at me and then smiled.

"Yo Faison. She's on you," my other roommate said.

"Yeah right. I'm not going to the hole for you or that chick," I replied.

Actually, for a piece of that, I would go to the hole, I thought to myself. She was mid height with a nice shape and long hair done in a pony tail that went through the back of her "Bureau of Prisons" cap. Shit. As a matter of fact, if I could get that, I'd go to the hole proudly.

After the institution count was cleared, mail call proceeded as usual. I went down to collect my few pieces and then returned to my room. "Ms. Duplaix" her name tag read, was working my housing unit. Every so often she would walk the floors from room to room doing her normal security rounds. When she arrived at my room and saw me in my bunk reading a letter, she smiled again and threw up a brief wave.

"Hi Mr. Faison. How are you today?"

"I'm okay Ms. Duplaix. Thanks for asking," I replied as I sat up to see her panty line on her way out.

"Good, that's good. Your quiet. I don't really see you out too much," she said while exiting my room.

"I'm here. I just have better things to do than to participate in a lot of nothing, you know?"

When she reached my doorway, she looked at me. "That's good. Stay out of trouble," and then gave me a

wink.

I sat there trying to figure out what that was all about and then concluded that she was just an outgoing person with a nice personality.

Later that evening as I sat in the T.V. room watching BET, Ms. Duplaix walked in beside me.

"Are you enjoying the videos or are you just looking at women's asses on T.V.?" she asked.

"You want me to tell you the truth?"

"Nope, save it. I all ready know," she said while laughing and walking away.

As the day came to an end, I went down to drop a letter in the mailbox which is located in the C.O.'s bubble. Ms. Duplaix sat at her desk eating something that smelled delicious.

"What are you eating?" I asked.

"This is some pasta with Vodka sauce that I cooked last night."

"Oh? It smells delicious," I replied before asking, "So, you cook do you?"

"Yes, I have to. I live by myself. Who else is going to do it for me?"

"I would really love to have a nice home cooked meal," I vaguely hinted before leaving her office. She looked up at me and I shot her a "yes, I'm looking at you" stare, then turned and headed back to the staircase up to my floor and into my room.

Eight a.m. the next morning, I awoke listening to Philadelphia's Power Ninety-Nine, FM's morning show. Some girl called in and told Wendy Williams, a morning show host, that she looked like a man and probably was a man before. I cracked up laughing because this girl

obviously had Wendy Williams mistaken. She had shouted me out a few times on the radio when she was in New York because of a woman situation I was in some years ago. When I saw her at a party before she got married and had her child, I definitely wanted to chase her "hot and juicy" but I never got around to it. Herself, D-Lee, and Coby Cobe did their morning show thing along with some gay guy simply named "how-you-doin'" (one word). I headed to the restroom, brushed my teeth, washed my face and continued my daily regime of exercise, study and reading in the prison compound that had an undercurrent like the streets itself.

Bianca wrote me that afternoon and told me that she had seen some old schoolmates and they had asked about me. Ni'chelle wrote an informed me that Happy had been killed in a motorcycle accident out in D.C. and that Ruben had moved out to California to get away from everything. Reading Ni'chelle's letter made tears well up in my eyes. All I could see was Hap on his motorcycle up in the air or Hap in his Acura or hugging me when he found out I was fucking Ni'chelle.

Life was moving right before my eyes and all I could do for now was sit.

Faison, I brought that for you," Ms. Duplaix said in a low whispering tone while entering my room.

"You brought what?" I asked puzzled and a bit nervous.

"Your home cooked meal."

"Oh shit," I thought to myself.

"Listen, come down and get it from my office, but wear a coat so you can hide it."

"Okay, no problem. I'll be down in twenty minutes."

When I went down to pick up my entree from Ms. Duplaix, I put it in my coat and asked her, "What do I owe you for this pleasure?"

"Better conversation," she replied and winked at me again.

"I'll put this up and be right back."

When I opened the wrapped Tupperware plate in my room, I had chicken cacciatore in a bed of lettuce with a note on top of the bowl that read, "enjoy every bite."

I went back down to Ms. Duplaix's office.

"Thank you."

"No problem. Just don't let anyone know our secret."

"Don't even stress that. I don't talk to most of these guys anyway Ms. Duplaix."

"Call me Tiffany."

"Tiffany, that's a nice name."

"I hear the guys around here call you Diamond. That isn't your first name. Your name is Sedique, right?"

"Yeah. Diamond is a name that I picked up a few years ago."

"Do you mind if I call you that?" she asked adding, "I'll just call you "D" for short. Did you read the note I put on your plate?"

"Yeah, yeah. I read it, and I'm sure I will enjoy every bite."

"Let me know whenever you want to eat. I try to cook at least three or four times a week."

"Okay, cool, no problem. Tiffany, let me ask you

something, how far are we going with this? I don't want to cross any unwanted boundaries and seem disrespectful to you."

"Please, you can cross all the lines you want, as long as you don't fumble at the goal."

I smiled to myself. After all these years, I still got it.

"Diamond, what are you in here for, if you don't mind me asking?"

"I was rigged up on a drug conspiracy," I replied.

"How much time do you have left?"

"Well, now I have about eight years left. I had thirty, but I won some of my appeals and I was re-sentenced earlier last year."

"Damn, eight years! That's a long time D."

"Yeah. I know. Hopefully if I can prove my theory, I can get back into Court."

"Oh, that's good. What's your theory?"

"There's a crooked cop involved in my case."

"Victim of Circumstance vs. Master Of Situations"

One thing led to another and before I knew it, we were sneaking kisses and winks at each other for months to follow. Tiffany cooked for me and made sure I was comfortable for the time being. She wore thongs to work everyday and tormented me by purposely bending over in front of me.

"Tiff, stop playing games with me. You know what I want," I said as I had her pent up against the closed door in the C.O.'s bubble.

She kissed me. "D, watch it. Someone may see us," she said while grabbing my erected dick through my sweat pants. "You have to be patient. Shit, you've been without for this long. You can wait a minute more. Come down tonight, right now there's to many people walking around. I don't want any suspicions to surface."

"Okay," I said, grabbing her ass and pulling on her thong."

She shook her head.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing. It's just that I guess Tiffany's and Diamond's really do make fine jewelry."

"Yes, I guess you're right," I said while leaving her office. "Now we need to make an investment in some mutual pearls."

"Boy, that's all you think about."

"No it's not. I think about other things too."

"Yea, like what?"

"I ..., I ..., oh, I think about the weather," I said laughing.

She smiled, "I'll see you tonight D"

Tonight couldn't come fast enough. I did everything. Ran the track, watched T.V., read magazines, but it felt like forever. After the midnight count, I went back down stairs.

"Close the door behind you," she said as I walked in. "You know Diamonds, I think about you all the time. When I'm at home," she said walking toward me and then sitting on my lap.

"Do you?"

"Yes I do. I just can't help it," she replied, feeling me begin to press up against her ass.

I ran my hand up and down her inner thigh and began to unzip the zipper to her uniform pants. She sighed and hugged me.

"Diamond, what are you doing?" she asked uncaringly.

As I slid her thong over and inserted my middle finger into her warm pussy.

"Oh D, we can't do this, " she moaned as I slowly ran

my entire finger in and out of her while kissing her. Tiffany stopped me and stuck her hand into my sweat pants, beginning to massage me gracefully. When she felt how fully erect I was, she took it out and began to jerk me uncontrollably. I tried to position her open zipper on top of me but she jerked and licked in my ear.

"Tiffany, come on," I managed to get out.

She wouldn't stop or let me in.

"Give me my pearls first Diamond." she said just as I came.

"Tiff, what's up, why are you playing with me?"

"I'm not playing with you. I just wanted my pearls first," she said as she went down and licked all around the head of my dick, sapping up come like it was clam chowder. She then deep throated me and squeezed everything into her mouth before she got up. "Be patient, you'll get yours."

I smiled, looking at her with my juices all around her mouth. "Tiffany, do you have any friends in New York?"

"No, why?"

"Because, now that I really look at you, you remind me of my old roommate's cousin named Ni'chelle."

"No D, that's not me. I'm just a Jersey girl. Now go to your room before someone sees us."

The next morning after a beautiful sleep, our unit manager walked the unit. Her ass could've won Nobel Prizes but her attitude was tricky. "Good morning Mr. Faison," she said with a transparent smile.

"Good morning Ms. C," I replied watching her tote her helium ass down the hallway. By the time she reached the last room on my floor, when you looked down the hall, all you saw were heads peaking out of

their rooms, watching her ass sway from side to side as she walked.

Later in the evening, I called Danita. Her answering machine came on so I left a message. At mail call that evening, Bianca wrote me stating in her letter that I should hire a private investigator to investigate Detective Broffman. There was a big bust at a precinct in D.C. and a lot of cops were proven to be corrupt. "That's not a bad idea," I said to myself.

That night I asked Tiffany to look on the Internet and get me the numbers of all of the private investigators in the area that I was arrested in.

"D, my father is a professional P.I. and he works cases all along the east coast. I'll give you the number to his office and you can call him to see if he's interested in your case. If so, once you hire him, I'll let him know that we're friends and that will definitely increase his interest."

"Yea Tiff, I bet it would, but in what direction? I don't want him thinking that his little girl is screwing just anybody in prison."

"D, let me worry about that. Just call and see what he says first."

Tiffany gave me the number to her father's office. A week later I called. The receptionist answered the phone, "thank you for calling Invisible Men Private Investigator Services. How may I direct your call?"

"I'd like to speak with a Mr. Duplaix," "Please hold ..".

"Mr. Duplaix speaking. How may I assist you?" A very proper and professional voice said.

"My name is Sedique Faison and I am interested in obtaining your P.I. services."

"Okay, no problem. Is this a wife matter, a business matter, or a criminal matter?"

"It's a criminal matter."

"I see. Are you a victim?"

"Yes, yes I am."

"And who may your subject be?" he asked in a professional tone.

"My subject is a detective. I am currently incarcerated and I have reason to believe that there is a crooked cop on my case."

"And what state were you arrested in?"

"Virginia. I was arrested in Norfolk, Virginia."

"Okay Mr. Faison. My fee for out of state cases is two hundred dollars an hour, plus expenses. Since you're incarcerated, do you have a contact number for someone who will handle a retainer for you?"

"Yes, yes, I do, but first I'd like to know how much will you charge to get started."

"Well, investigating detectives is a lot of work, especially out of state. I think five thousand should cover it if not it shouldn't be too much more."

I gave Mr. Duplaix the number to my attorney that handled my trust account. He called and everything was taken care of.

That evening, Jeff wrote to me and told me that he was getting married. He met some girl at his job up in Yonkers and they've been dating for two years now. He wished me well and sent a picture of him and his fiancé.

I called Danita again and the same conversation continued. She wanted to visit me and talk to me face to face. Later, during the week I surprised her and

sent her a visiting application. I'd concluded that although she can never be trusted whole-heartedly, everyone deserves forgiveness. Being in prison all these years has taught me that it's not environment, history, education, or ability that predicts your future. It is the quality of your mind and discipline of your thinking.

The last six years of my life have been spent in a form of solitude. A lot of the questions that life asks, solitude answers if we just take time to listen. Anyone with a clear observation could see that the mandatory minimums in federal sentences are harsh and strategically targeted. Unfortunately, until it affects us personally we prefer to see through tint and not clarity.

I am not going to sit here and work for the prison industry for pennies an hour just so they can continue to build more prisons and lock up more minorities with their bear trap laws. It's so monopolized that even most of the employees here are married to each other. I had an issue and I was going to squeeze blood from a rock if that's what I had to do.

Tiffany, I spoke to your father."

"What did he say? Did he take your case?"

"Yea, he took it and he's been paid," I told her in her office that day.

She smiled, "it must really be interesting Diamond."

"We'll see shortly, won't we."

"Listen, I'm expecting a visit. Call me when they've arrived, okay?"

"Who's coming? Not one of those girls I hope! What are they going to do for you, or are you saying that I'm

not enough for you?"

I looked around to make sure no one was walking by and then grabbed her by her ass, pulling her into me. "Tiffany, you're more than enough. Don't ever let me hear you say that again, nor don't get jealous on me. There's a triple layered barb wire fence protecting me, that only you can get past." I pecked on her lips, then let her go.

She smiled, "What time are you expecting them? You better get dressed."

I can't afford to have Tiff the least bit upset. As it stands, her father is my hands and feet and I need her to keep him entertained.

Danita came to visit me with her son. He looked just like her. We sat and talked and she told me about how it was a mistake and wasn't supposed to happen and how she thought of me during her entire pregnancy. I asked her about his father and how her support was and about her life in general. Although the visit was awkward, because of seeing Danita with a child, it was nevertheless a heart felt visit. When it was over, she kissed me and gave me a tight sensual hug.

"I'm here for you Diamond" is all that was said before we parted and went separate ways.

When I arrived back in my unit, my roommate told me that the C.O. had been looking for me just minutes ago.

"She knows I went on a visit," I thought to myself as I walked back down to her office.

"You have mail Diamond and it's from my father's company. I haven't disrespected you and opened it, but I'm sure you know that I'm just as anxious as you

are to hear any good news. You also got a letter from someone named Dream," she said in her attitudal voice.

I opened the letter from Invisible Men P.I. Service first:

Dear Mr. Faison,

I am delighted to write to you with such enthusiastic news. Currently, our investigation has lead us into some seemingly inaccurate course of events regarding the target. I am not fully at liberty to discuss these events, but I assure you that when I am better informed and prepared, I will advise you accordingly.

Very Truly Yours,

Mr. J. Duplaix

I handed Tiffany the letter and we both smiled although no details were given. In the midst of that legal mumbo jumbo, something was said.

"I told you he's good D."

"Yea, maybe so, but let's not jump any broomsticks just yet. Whatever he discovers, he has to prove relevant to my case in order for it to benefit me."

That night I called Bianca.

"Sedique, why haven't you called me? Did you receive Terry's letter?"

"Which one?"

"She said she wrote you last week to tell you that Dre called and he told her that some Private Investigator named Mr. Duplaix came to visit him."

"Oh really," I stated sounding slightly alarmed.

"Yea, Dre told him that Detective Richard Broffman showed him the picture that you all took a while ago. Sedique, those detectives that live across the street from the old house broke in and stole your favorite picture."

"Bianca, they stole more than that."

"What else did they steal?"

"They stole me! My whole case is rigged up."

"Well listen, you need to call or write Terry as soon as you get her letter. Oh, and Sedique, I have something that I have to tell you."

"What? What happened?"

"Nothing's happened. I just wanted to tell you that..."

"That what Bianca?"

"That I'm getting married."

"Married!"

"Yes, married, Sedique."

"Congratulations, who's the lucky guy?"

"You don't know him. I've been seeing him over the last two years and he asked me not too long ago."

"Okay, so when is the wedding?"

"Next year. November 24th to be exact. Sedique, I'll still be just a phone call away though. I know you were railroaded. You'll pull through."

"Yea, thanks Bianca. Jeff wrote to me not to long ago. He's getting married too. I guess life is really beautiful out there. It's all love though. I'm happy for everyone. I don't hold any grudges. Without commitment, we can't learn to care for another person more than ourselves. Bianca, if you're happy, then I'm happy for you."

"Thanks Sedique. You know I'll always love you, right?"

"Yea, yea I know."

"Have you seen Puff Daddy's new video?"

"Yea, he's really doing good isn't he?"

"Yea, and your friends Gooch and Cuda have their own record label too."

"Yea, yea I know. I'll see them all when my slate is clean and all of this is over with."

"Okay Sedique, I'll talk to you later. I gotta' run. Damn, I almost forgot to tell you. Your other bitch Melanie is pregnant."

"What do you mean my other bitch?"

"Diamond, don't play with me. Yes, I'm getting married, but you know I'm that bitch still."

We both laughed.

"You're crazy Bianca."

"Oh, so now I'm crazy. You wasn't saying that in Biology class years ago or when I was feeding you all this good pussy whenever you wanted it."

"Okay, let's not go there. Take care, I'll talk to you later."

"Diamonds, when you get out, can you do my hair for me?"

"Yeah, sure Bianca, no problem. But there's one condition."

"What?"

"Call your friend Ni'chelle and let her know that you'll be getting the deluxe treatment."

"Don't even go there. That was your coming home gift boy."

"Hay, I'm not complaining. Ni'chelle told me you two practiced before I even came home. Does your future husband know about your big appetite?"

"Okay, I'm hanging up now Sedique."

"I love you too Bianca. You know you're my number one. Don't be to hard on the poor guy," I said laughingly.

D, my father came home last night. He asked me right in the middle of dinner if I knew an inmate named Sedique Faison."

"Yes, and ..."

"And I told him that I knew you and that you were a real quiet guy that seemed nice. I wanted to tell him so bad that I had fallen for you, but I didn't. He told me that you had a good case and he was leaving back for Virginia in two days to continue his work on your behalf. D, he said that the detective that investigated and arrested you is a dirty cop indeed. He's sat in on some of his court testimonies and watched as he professionally lied under oath. He also said that on your case his grand jury testimony is completely inaccurate and all fabricated."

"Tiffany, I knew it! I told you. This bastard put the fix on me! Your father went to visit an associate of mine named Andre. Did he say anything about him?"

"Yea, as a matter of fact, he said that Andre was willing to testify if we can get this detective into court."

"We?"

"Yes, we Diamond. I am with you 100%. Guess what else?"

"What?" I asked enthusiastically.

Tiffany put her hand on her hip and whispered,

"my father's company has talked to Internal Affairs and they've agreed to set a sting operation to weed the force of its crooked cops. He told me not to say anything to you, but how could I keep this a secret in my mouth when I can't even keep your dick out of it?"

"Your the best Tiff."

"No, my father is," she smiled. "Sedique, I want to tell him so bad about us."

"No, not yet. We have to wait at least until the court date arrives or something."

As the weeks past, anxiety began to tear at me. I was calling the Private Investigation Services just checking to see if I had any messages. I vowed to write a book or something about this particular episode of my life, but never got around to it.

Weeks turned into months and I hadn't heard from anyone. Tiffany was on a one week vacation from the prison so it was extremely boring. I found myself doing the average inmate events like shooting pool, playing cards, lusting over women porno magazines.

At mail call that evening, I received a certified letter from I.M.P.I. Services and a package from Tiffany.

I opened the letter first:

Dear Mr. Faison,

Please be advised that your retainer of $5,000 has been depleted. However, because of genuine interest, my services are still fully engaged on your behalf. I estimate that $2,000 will cover the concluding cost of your case. I am aware that your attorney has a trust account on your behalf.

Please inform him of the above mentioned additional fees.

Also, I am delighted to bring to your attention the case of United States of America v. Detective Richard Broffman. The Internal Affairs, along with my team, organized a sting in which your arresting officer partook and introduced false evidence and testimony perjuring himself and tainting the courts.

I will explain more to you upon further discussion.

Very Truly. I.M.P.I.,

Mr. Duplaix
Private Investigator

When Tiffany came back to work the following day, I showed her the letter.

"Did you get the magazines I sent?"

"Yes, thank you. The FEDS Magazine and the Don Diva Magazine right?"

"Yes, do you like them?"

"Yea, they're good,

She read the letter from her father and stared at me in disbelief.

"Does this mean you're getting out D?"

"No, not exactly. It just means that the bastard is being brought up on charges."

"Well, how will that help you?"

"If I can show the prosecutor and the courts that his investigation in my case was personal and not professional, then I may be able to get back in court."

"How will you show that?"

"I don't know Tiffany. Where there's a will, there's a way. I will find the way, believe me, I will."

She winked at me. "I'm happy for you D."

"Yea, how happy?"

"When this unit is released to go to chow, meet me in the bathroom on the second floor and I'll show you how happy I am."

As soon as the unit was released, I tore to the second floor bathroom. Tiffany locked the door and put the chair in the shower stall. "Sit," she said.

I sat and Tiffany came and sat straddling me, facing me.

"D, I really have grown attached to you and I know it's wrong."

"Wrong, why?"

"Wrong because my job and future could very well be on the line if I were to ever get caught."

"Tiffany, did you want me to meet you in this bathroom, just so you could tell me about your nervousness?" I said while holding my hands around her waist.

"No D. I asked you to come here so I could tell you something."

"Tell me what?" I asked as my pipe began to grow beneath her spread legs.

"Sedique, the letter you let me read. I already knew about it. My father is so much into your case that he called my mother and told her everything."

"Oh really?"

"Yes, it's really sad how someone as nice as you can be railroaded. My father said that the Internal Affairs questioned and threatened a Mr. Anderson. Do you know him?"

"Yea, that's Broffman's partner. Why?"

"Well, Mr. Anderson stated that while that Broffman guy was at his house watching a football game years ago, he looked across the street and saw your house and your car and wanted to break in just to see what you were up to."

"Your father told you this?"

"No, he told my mother, but I was listening on the other phone."

"Okay, so you say all of this is to say what Tiffany?"

"Well, I just wanted you to know that I've fallen for you and I'm more to you that you think I am," she said while holding my face and kissing me.

Tiffany put her hand below, feeling that I was totally loaded and ready to fire, then she leaned forward and I heard a scratching noise. I looked down as she was unbuttoning my pants and saw her uniform pants split open at the seam.

"It's velcro," she smiled. "No one else would ever suspect it." Tiffany held me, positioning me at the point of her warm entrance and then slowly sat filling herself while looking me in my eyes.

"Diamond" she said while riding me slowly, "there's more."

I was lost in a newfound heaven, as I held Tiffany, trying not to come too fast.

"It's okay, relax. I know it's been awhile. Diamond," she moaned as I began to thrust in and out of her.

"I ..., I ..., God," she sighed while blushing.

I grabbed her shoulders and pulled her deep down into me. Releasing and shaking nervously. Tiffany held my head against her chest and then looked me

in the eyes again.

"I called your prosecutor and your Judge. They're speaking with your attorney this week. If Detective Broffman is convicted, your entire indictment will be recalled and you'll have to appear in court."

I could've come again. That brought me back. "You did what?"

"You heard me. I told you that I'm for you 100%," she said as she stood and re-fixed the velcro at the crotch of her pants.

"Oh shit, that's good news Tiff."

"I know it is, why do you think I needed to collect from you," she laughed.

"Collect huh? Very funny Tiffany."

"Come on, we gotta' get out of here before everybody comes back from chow."

"You go first. I'll meet you down stairs. We'll talk more later."

Just as I was exiting the bathroom, Khadafi was coming in. He saw a chair in the shower but didn't see anyone or hear any water. I chatted with him loudly as he used the urinal and he walked straight out.

"Shit, that was close," I said to myself.

Five minutes later, Tiffany was back in her office swinging her keys and fanning her legs together while whistling some slow song that I had never heard. Khadafi and I walked past her office.

"Hi Ms. Duplaix,"

"Good afternoon Mr. Faison. Nice to see you standing strong around here."

"Yea, I'm holding on."

Khadafi looked at me when we got outside. "Yea, I'm holding on. I bet you are kid. If I was fucking her, I'd be holding on too."

"What are you talking about Khadafi?"

"Diamond you have everyone else fooled, but not me. The way you two speak and smile at each other whenever she's working. I know you're doing something. Plus, you smell like pussy right now kid. And I know she was in the bathroom when I went in there."

"Yo, you're bugging Khadafi."

"Okay, then let me bug, but I know if you don't go change your pants and take a shower, nigga's will be looking at you real strange all day."

I went back inside, showered and changed. Tiffany made her rounds and when she entered my room, she winked and kept walking.

"Critically Acclaimed"

The next morning, my attorney made a special trip, all the way up to New Jersey to visit me for the second time in more than six years now.

"Mr. Faison, I have some overwhelmingly good news for you."

"Oh yea, what?"

"Your indictment may very well have to be recalled thanks to some work that's been going on. It seems that the head Federal Prosecutor wants to prosecute Detective Broffman to the fullest. She's lining up his case against him right now and amongst perjury and criminal conduct, he's facing bribery and forgery charges. The state prosecutor has cooperated with the Federal Government in stating that this detective submitted false statements and documents to the courts on three recent incidents and also in the murder charge that was brought against you some years ago. The government wants to make this a high profile case and expects to use media coverage and the press to heighten its message to

crooked cops. Mr. Faison, you may not like what I'm about to say but as an attorney, I have to inform you of this."

"Yeah, what? Go ahead."

"The government would like to talk to you about your involvement in drug activity."

No!"

"Wait. "Before you answer. Anything you say to them is completely off the record and I will be right beside you the entire time, Mr. Faison," he added. "It's no doubt that you have sold drugs. That's not disputed. However, that Private Investigator that you hired, Mr. Duplaix, has helped make the bigger picture. You were seemingly racially profiled because of the lifestyle you led. Although the government does not condone it and would love to prosecute you to the fullest as they've already did, Detective Broffman's actions have been submitted and proven to a grand jury by the Internal Affairs. He's being indicted and probably arrested as we speak."

"What?" I smiled.

"Yes, and if you simply talk to them, your entire indictment will be recalled and you will be set free."

"Mr. Donaldson, are you telling me that if I just say yes I was a drug dealer and yes he arrested me, that my whole case becomes null and void, because of his informal tactics?"

"Yes Sedique, that's what I'm telling you."

"Will I get a chance to clear me name in the media?"

Well, I'm not sure, but if you would like a press conference, then myself and Mr. Duplaix could possibly arrange that. By the way, where did you find this

Private Investigator? He's tooth and nail ruthless."

"I'll tell you later, just don't ever make me have to investigate you," I laughed.

"So, what are you going to do Sedique?"

"You're the lawyer. Go do that law crap and set the appointment."

We shook hands and our visit was over. I smiled all the way back to my unit, knowing that soon, all of this should be over.

The next Thursday, my name was on the call-out, Sedique Faison to R & D (Receiving and Discharge), I was leaving the prison with hopes to never return.

That night, I packed out, said good byes to certain guys on the compound and talked to Tiffany all night.

She told me that she had been feeling sick and was going to take a few days off since I was leaving so she could get some rest and catch up on some house work.

When Friday morning came, I was at R & D at 7:30 sharp. By nine o'clock, I was shackled, handcuffed, and on the long bus ride back to a town that had changed so much over the years. After a layover in two holdover stops, and another ten hour shackled up bus ride, I arrived at the Federal Building back in Norfolk, Virginia. Before I was even assigned to a local jail my attorney came down to see me. They were expecting me and wanted to talk to me that day.

"Sedique," my attorney said, "it seems that their biggest interest is what made you decide to hire a Private Investigator and furthermore Investigator Duplaix. Did you know that he once worked the Intelligence Department for Internal Affairs?"

"Shit, he did?"

"Yes, and he's relentlessly nailed crooked cops and agents from Washington, DC. How did you find this firm?" he asked.

"Mr. Donaldson, I told you I'll tell you later."

"Okay, well, if you're not too tired, they're ready, and not to worry, Mr. Duplaix is upstairs too, so I doubt they'll try anything tricky."

The Marshal opened the bullpen and hand cuffed me, leading me to the elevator and up to the third floor. We exited and entered a room overlooking the city. My attorney and Mr. Duplaix formally introduced me.

"Mr. Faison," my attorney said, "this is Mrs. Felay. She's the head prosecutor in the Eastern District of Virginia."

I nodded silently, looking at this older white lady. "How are you?" I asked, shaking her hand.

"Fine, Mr. Faison. Just fine. Relax, have a seat. You're not on trial and you're not going to be asked any heinous questions," she said assuringly.

"Mr. Fasion, I'm Mr. Finey."

"I know exactly who you are. You sentenced me to 365 months like you were simply trying to order a cheeseburger." Saying that made me think about Happy and what held told me in the barbershop years ago.

"Well Mr. Faison, it seems the guidelines called for your sentence."

"No Mr. Finey, you chose to find frugal ways to enhance me as far as possible."

"Well, that's neither here nor there. You've won your appeals and now your indictment is being recalled."

"Here nor there? Mr. Duplaix, have you investigated this man?"

"Calm down Mr. Faison," my attorney stated. "He's not the culprit. He simply presented to the courts what Detective Broffman presented to him."

"This is true," Mrs. Felay added.

I sat there feeling not so free after all, but anxious to hear what was to be said.

"Mr. Faison, I am the head prosecutor and anyone that has acted unjustly, I prosecute to the fullest," Mrs. Felay stated. "Thanks to your hiring Mr. Duplaix, we have undoubtedly discovered that Mr. Broffman's actions are unwarranted and unconstitutional. Investigator Duplaix has worked for the government and has an outstanding track record. How did you find him, if you don't mind me asking?"

"A friend of mine in prison said that he was the best they'd ever seen."

"Okay, it appears that your entire investigation was tainted. Detective Anderson has cooperated and stated on the record that Detective Broffman broke into your home, bugged your telephone, and harassed your girlfriend for no other reason than the fact that you lived across the street."

"We are aware that you were incarcerated for possession of marked money in the state some years ago, and Detective Broffman was your arresting officer in that case as well. However, the fact that he falsified evidence, cohersed testimony, and personally treated potential witnesses to unwarranted privileges, makes the law unjust."

"What do you mean unwarranted privileges?"

"Your buddy Andre has testified that Detective Broffman let him have sex with his girlfriend right in

his office as long as he agreed to say everything that he told him. We confirmed this to be true because she has had a baby boy and the blood test match 99.9%. Andre has been in custody so that explains that."

"Mr. Faison," she continued, "there's more, but it's no need to go into that. Detective Broffman is in custody. He was set up in a sting operation organized by my agency and Mr. Duplaix. He's also facing possible homicide charges."

"What?" I smiled.

"Yes, the murder that he charged you with. We have reason to believe he himself was involved in. The states prosecutor has testified to the grand jury about his misconduct in constructing the case against you. Mr. Faison, you're a drug dealer, and we know it."

"Was, Was a drug dealer." I interjected.

"The fact remains that had your investigation been conducted properly, you would still be in prison. However, it's more important to us to see to it that these types of incidents don't continue to happen amongst the bureau."

"Okay, is that it? Is that all you want to tell me?"

"No, I also want you to know that your sister Tiffany has called our office on numerous occasions."

"Oh shit," I thought to myself. Mr. Duplaix looked at me and I totally ignored him.

"I have a daughter named Tiffany," he stated.

"Tiffany Faison," Mrs. Felay added. "You're lucky to have such a nice sister."

"Yeah, very lucky," I grinned.

"Okay, I have two questions for you Mr. Diamonds. Has Broffman ever harassed you or anyone you know?"

"Yes, years ago he harassed my old roommate Malachi. He stopped my ex-girlfriend Bianca, and he tried to question me when I got arrested."

"Second question, will you say that in court?"

"Against him?"

"That's it?"

"Yes, that's it."

"On one condition," "Do you think you can get ABC, NBC, C-Span, and CNN News to film me?"

We all laughed.

"His court date is scheduled for next Tuesday. You'll be released and a free man that evening."

After the meeting, I was transported back to the local jail. The same C.O.'s were working there and even some of the same inmates were back doing 30 days, 6 months violation, or trespassing charges.

That Tuesday morning came and at 4 a.m. I was shackled, handcuffed and transferred to the court building. When I got there, the Marshals told me that my lawyer left a package for me. I opened the package and it was a light blue denim Sean John suit with a pair of Gucci loafers and belt to match. A note simply read "Tiffany" on it. I got dressed and everything fit perfectly I saw while admiring myself in the glass reflection.

At nine a.m., the Marshals came to take me from the bullpen. I extended my hands, expecting to be handcuffed, even in a nice suit.

"You're a free man. I'll walk you to the Courtroom door and when you go inside, you can sit where you want. Your lawyer is seated on the right side with some of his friends."

When I entered the Courtroom, everyone was there. Jeff, Bianca, Ni'chelle, Ruben, Aunt Freckles, Danita, Dream. I walked over and sat beside my lawyer who was sitting beside Mr. Duplaix. "Who told all these people?" I asked, waving nervously at all of my old associates.

"I told Bianca," my attorney replied, "and Danita offered to pay for everyone's flight. She said she invested the five thousand I gave her years ago and it was the least she could do."

Mr. Duplaix was whispering something to a black lady that sat a couple of rows back.

"All rise for the Honorable Judge Stanley," the court bailiff stated as everyone stood. The Judge entered and everyone waited for him to take his seat before being seated.

"This is the case of the United States of America vs. Richard Broffman," the Judge stated.

"Is the prosecution ready to proceed?"

"Yes sir, your Honor. The Prosecution is ready."

"Is counsel for the defense ready?"

"Yes sir, your Honor. The defendant is ready."

"Okay, the prosecution may present its case."

"Your Honor," Mrs. Felay stated. "The defendant in this case is ... was I should say, a special agent for the state. Throughout the course of our investigation, and thanks to the help of the internal affairs and Mr. Duplaix, we have soundly discovered and concluded that this former detective is a criminal himself and furthermore, a threat to the United States government. The government has interviewed witnesses including other officials who testified and stated that Mr. Broffman has indeed initiated unconstitutional

actions. The government will show that this man has manipulated his authoritative position and persuaded others to follow his lead. The government will also show that Mr. Broffman falsified statements, perjured testimony, and bargained unconstitutionally with witnesses. The government will produce numerous witnesses including his former partner who will testify that this man has selectively chosen individuals by way of racially profiling to hang his dirty work on."

Detective Broffman sat beside his attorney trying to maintain his stale smile and show no emotion. His attorney was writing notes down and shaking his head.

"Your Honor, if you will, we would like to call our first witnesses."

"So be it."

"Your Honor, we call Mr. Ruben Martinez."

"Ruben Martinez! What?"

Rube walked up and took the stand.

"What the fuck is going on?" I asked my attorney.

"Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?" the bailiff asked Rube.

"I do."

"Sir, Please state your name," the prosecutor asked Rube.

"My name is Ruben Martinez."

"And where are you from Mr. Maritinez?"

"I'm from New York City, Spanish Harlem."

"And do you know the defendant?"

I looked at Rube and he winked at me. "Yes, yes. I do know Detective Broffman."

"And just how well do you know Mr. Broffman?"

"I met Mr. Broffman some years ago on a fourth of July weekend myself and a friend came down to visit Sedique and Mr. Broffman introduced himself to us at a hotel that we were staying in."

"Upon introduction did you later meet with Mr. Broffman and if so, for what purposes?"

"Objection your Honor!" Broffman's attorney yelled.

"Overruled," the Judge stated. "Please continue."

"Mr. Martinez, did you ever meet with Detective Broffman? And if so, for what purposes?"

"Yes, I met with Mr. Broffman and he told me the he knew my reasons for visiting and assured me that Sedique would be well protected for ten thousand a month."

"What do you mean by 'well protected'?"

"I mean that Sedique would not have to worry about any police interaction because Rich was being paid off."

"And did you solidify this agreement?"

"Yes, yes we did. My partner gave him twenty thousand up front the next day. Richard brought two girls to our room and told us this was his way of showing his gratitude."

"How long did this continue?"

"It lasted for awhile until he wanted more money and we refused to pay."

I sat there thinking to myself. I don't believe this shit. I remember the night him and Happy had those two girls in the hotel room. Broffman was on the payroll all along!

Rube continued. "When Sedique was arrested for

the state, Broffman was supposed to make the charge disappears. When he didn't, we cut him off. That's probably why he tried to railroad Sedique."

I almost fainted. I couldn't believe this cop was on the payroll. Nobody had ever told me anything. I was always told that sooner or later it catches up with you.

The trial continued and the government called several witnesses to testify against Broffman. Detective Anderson, his partner, was the most damaging. Andre and his girlfriend even testified. The doctor that took the blood test testified to time of conception, which placed Dre in custody.

Broffman's attorney tried to argue some points but they all backfired against him. By the time the trial was over, I think he even wanted to testify against his own client.

The investigator, Mr. Duplaix, testified that Broffman fell for a setup that his company along with Internal Affairs had organized. I wasn't even called to the stand before the government and defense rested their cases.

The Judge took a twenty-minute recess. When he came back in the Courtroom, it sounded like he said "guilty" before he said anything else.

"Mr. Broffman. I don't exactly know what the guidelines will call for in all of these convictions, but if I had the power to sentence you right now, I would. You are a disgrace to the government of the United States of America. Your kind will not be tolerated. You should hope that you do not come before my bench on your sentencing date. You shall be made a prime

example. Case adjourned. Bailiff, get this criminal out of my Courtroom. Mr. Sedique Faison. If you are in my Court room, please stand."

I stood up. "That would be me Your Honor."

"I have read your case over and over again. I have read progress reports for every year that you've spent incarcerated. You were a college student and you got involved in narcotic trafficking. I see that you've re-entered college and took some classes in the Federal Prison System. Mr. Felay, the prosecutor, has informed me that you are the individual who hired investigator Duplaix in this case."

"Yes sir, I did your Honor."

"Well young man, although you have participated in the distribution of drugs, I still can not see how Congress could justify sentencing you so harshly. With all that this detective has done, he probably will not receive even half of your original sentence. Mr. Faison, you are a free man now. I suggest you go back to college and maybe start a family or something. The Federal System is probably full of inmates that should not be serving such lengthy sentences. You've risked a lot proving your case, but if you hadn't, then you would've risked even more."

Your Honor, if I may, I would like to just say one thing."

"One second young man, I'm not quite finished. As of this moment, your indictment exist no more. You cannot be brought up on any charges within the Eastern District of Virginia that exist from this day back. Now, if you should commit a crime, then of course you will face punishment. You are free to go.

Now you may speak."

"Well your Honor, I don't really have too much to say, I just have one demonstration."

I looked over at Broffman being handcuffed and gave him the finger. "That's it your Honor. Thank you."

As I was exiting the Courtroom onto the free sidewalk, news cameras attacked me from every angle. All of my associates were behind me and Mr. Donaldson and Mr. Duplaix were at my sides.

Hey, you said you wanted a press conference. Here's your shot," Mr. Donaldson smiled.

As soon as I was about to open my mouth, Tiffany ran up and hugged and kissed me. Everyone was in state of shock. "Who is that white girl?" I heard someone in the background say.

Mr. Duplaix looked at his daughter and then looked at me. He was in total awe.

"Do you like the suit and shoes I picked out for you?" she asked while hugging me.

"Tiffany, what's going on here?" Mr. Duplaix asked.

"Daddy, I gave him your number so he could hire you."

The same black lady that I saw Mr. Duplaix talking to in the courtroom stepped up. "Honey, she loves him."

I looked at them two. Mr. and Mrs. Black and White Duplaix. Then I looked at their daughter.

"Your mother is bla ..".

"Shhhh," she interrupted me, "of course she is."

My attorney stood there speechless. "Sedique, you sly fox you."

Mr. Duplaix stood there scratching his head and his wife came over and gave me a hug and whispered in my ear, "guess what? You're going to be a daddy."

I looked over at Tiffany and she was patting her belly.

The news cameras rushed up to me calling me by all of my names, "Diamond, Sedique, Mr. Faison, would you care to make a statement?"

"Go ahead," Mr. Duplaix said, looking totally lost.

Hot Damn ... It's a New Day

I held Tiffany's hand and began my statement into the live T.V. cameras. "To everyone who is able to see and hear the words that I speak today, I would like to say that the laws structured towards federal sentencing are harsh and unjust. The Congress that enacted these disparities needs to be investigated themselves. Young black women now fill the prison system at a rate higher than white men. This is not an issue of racism, it's an issue of organized crime misconstrued as justice. It is imperative that the mothers, sisters, wives, and girlfriends of people that are incarcerated stand up and vote. The energy that will fuel a change can only be produced by a genuine love. Actions speak louder than words, so although you may tell someone that's incarcerated that you're doing this or thinking that. No one sees your words so you can't be doing all that you think you are. If we as a nation want a rainbow, then we must deal with the rain that's going on amongst each other. Saying that we have potential is saying that we

aren't doing anything now. Everyone is quick to judge and mis-judge the low-level drug dealer and persecute them. However, not too much is said about the crooked cops who even go as far as letting the drugs into the country. There are not too many drug lords working in the prison industrial industry. That's because they're still funding the Congressional Parties."

"Great minds talk about ideas. Average minds talk about events while small minds talk about people. The language of comparison is not the language of lesser or better, but of limitation and opportunity. My case is a very small example of the things that go on in our judicial system. Our system is not humble and it has no reverence. It is injected and bloated with it's own technology. If you do not begin to exercise your positive votes, sooner or later it will happen to you." The sentence I received left me no choice but to get Rich or die trying.

THE END

EPILOGUE

Ten years later ...

"Daddy, can Jeffrey come over and spend the night?"

"I don't mind son, but you have to ask your mother."

Jeffrey was my friend's oldest son. He and his wife had a happy marriage and Jeff and I were partners in one of my companies.

"Mommy, Dad said to ask you if Jeffrey could come over and spend the night."

"Sedique, why do you always have to have your friends spend the night? You know you have school tomorrow."

"I know, but Dad said he'll drop me and Jeff off on his way to work."

"Okay, yes, he can stay over, but you're not staying up all night you know. Your grandfather and your father will be investigating cases from their new clients."

"I know, Tiffany, thanks."

"Excuse me young man. What did you call me?"

"Nothing, I said, thanks Mom."

The next morning I dropped little Jeff and Sedique off at school. When we were in the car, Sedique asked me, "Dad, do you have a pencil? I forgot mine."

"Sure son, here, take this one," I said, handing him my pencil from my shirt.

"Yo, Dique, why didn't you just wait until we got in class so you could ask that girl you like for a pencil?" Jeffrey stated.

"Girl you like? What girl do you like son?'

"It's nothing Dad, Jeffrey's just teasing me because this girl named Bianca is in my class and she's always waving at me."

I pulled up to the front of their school and looked at the two kids. "Lord, please don't let this little girl have a sundress on," is all I could think to say.

QUESTIONS/ANSWER SESSION WITH AUTHOR..."ZORO"

Q. **What was your motivation for writing this book?**
A. "This book has been in me for quite a while now. I've always said that I was going to write a book; then one day, after analyzing a lot of experiences and a lot of other writings, I just sat down in my cell and started writing. I guess the real motivation for writing this one in particular is ... my life."
Q. **What was the most challenging part of writing this book?**
A. "Wow ... there were a couple, but I would have to say ... Malachi's murder. That part really touched me."
Q. **Are the characters based on real people?**
A. "(laughs) ... yeah ... yes they are ... every last one of them. Well ... with the exception of maybe one or two."
Q. **Being that you're currently incarcerated in the federal prison system, how do you feel about your surroundings?**
A. "Well ... prison itself sucks, but I make my own surroundings. I try to network and stay as positively busy as possible. The staff in this particular institution operate on a organized buddy system; most of them, anyway. As for the C.O.s (correction officers), some are ex-military nuts, some are terrible, but some are great. You read the book (smiles): "The laws that govern this system are truly amazing. They're a meticulous design — whoever initiated the blueprint for this shit ... whew! ... they're dangerous."
Q. **There are quite a few street novels that tell various sides of the same story: How does yours differ?**

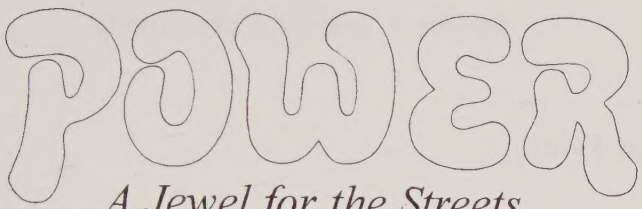
A. "I'm writing with educational intentions of entertaining as well as teaching. I enjoy other novels and I'm a Terri Woods fan. I just want to add to that genre and hopefully make some younger brothers and sisters say ... "damn!" Because really ... it's like that. This book is fiction basically for two reasons: one is the names have been changed to protect the innocent ... and the guilty. And two ... well ... I'll let you figure out the second reason (laughs)."

Q. **Are you working on any other projects and would you like to say anything to anyone in particular?**

A. "Yes ... as a matter of fact, I am working on a few more projects. I have another novel that I have just started but, more importantly, I have a website. It is **WWW.N.Interactive.com. To put it short, it is: Insight, Information, Interviews and Entertainment for and from people on the Inside.** Check it out. We're bridging the gap; it's where Hip Hop meets ... prison. I urge all inmates to have their family check it out or write to it yourself. We want your story. The address is _____. Hit us and we'll send you a free press release and everything you need to know to get on. As far as anything to say to anyone in particular: to all of the execs and rappers out there, your voices are powerful. Use them wisely. Governments are artificial creations. When governments become destructive, it is the right and duty of the people to abolish them. The war on drugs, and its mandatory minimum sentencing, are in fact weapons of mass destruction that must be abolished. I applaud Russell Simmons for his involvement in the Hip Hop Action Network.

Also, to the readers of this novel: I hope you enjoyed it but be mindful that the game is not that easy, and every federal prisoner is not fucking a C.O."

Interview over.
Conducted by:



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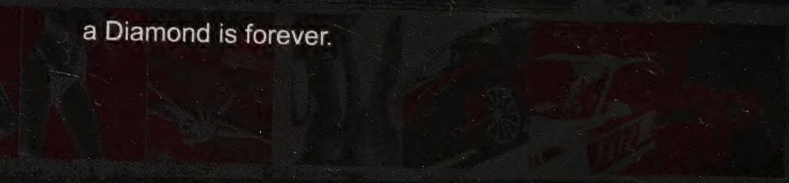
a Diamond is forever.



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